Love,

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by NextGenFangirl

Summary

Excerpt from chapter 6:

“–Honestly Rose you are far too high strung, are you gonna make a stupid bet stop you from pursuing this. You are literally obsessed with this guy,” Gene sauntered back towards her own bed.

“I am not,” Rose said matter-of-factly.

“You kinda are,” Saira chimed in. “The only other person I hear you talk about more is Scorpius Malfoy”. Rose rolled her eyes at the two of them. “You two are impossible”. She folded the letter away, leaving it exposed on her bedside table.

Cross-posted on AO3.
There aren't too many HP fics on here, and none for this ship yet (from what I could see). But feel free to give it a try :)

Chapter 1: The Journey Back Home

The cold air bit at his lungs as he breathed in. Smoke drifted across the station, shrouding the platform.

As he strode along the side of the train. Their eyes tracked him as though he were a wild animal, waiting for him to pounce.

If he turned around they would cringe. They would look away in embarrassment, knowing they had been caught, and he would get all the satisfaction of it. A small smirk tugged at the corner of his mouth.

The train hissed, another cloud of steam swallowing the platform.

Briefly he closed his eyes, took a deep breath, steadied himself…

This was going to be a long year–

“Scor,” a voice uttered from behind.

He turned to find Sam Zabini.

His face twisted into a smile. It was the type of smile on your face when you spot the first bit of snow. He had not seen her in ages. He did not embrace her, because he knew she hated that. Scorpius stood stiffly next to her.

She waited for him to say something. He searched for words instead. Her hair was longer than last term, lighter at the ends from the summer sun. She'd started wearing more makeup. Even her clothes looked new. None of it mattered enough to comment on.

Her eyes flicked to the prefect badge pinned to his chest.

“Seriously,” she gestured to the badge.

He put his hand on his chest, covering the pin.

“Yes…”

He didn’t have anything more eloquent to say.

His eyes wandered. Her shoes looked like they had never been worn. She wasn’t in her uniform yet, a fancy set of dress robes he recognized from their trip to Diagon Alley last summer.

“Are you checking me out or something, Malfoy?” she snorted. “Come, we should get on.”

She grabbed his stiff arm and dragged him onto the train.

He managed to pull his trunk behind him. The hallways were narrow and though they were tall enough for him to stand up straight, their width made it difficult for Scorpius to navigate with his luggage.

Sam did not slow down.

He peeked through the compartments on the way through the train. In the third compartment he caught a glimpse of a mop of dark hair. The smile on his face faded.

Orion noticed him, their eyes meeting.

Scorpius hurried along after Sam further down the train.

He could hear the next compartment before he saw them.

The Gryffindors.

The two girls lounged across the train benches, copies of *Teen Witch* spread across their laps. Weasley's friends.

Scorpius scrunched his nose. He slowed as he passed the compartment. His eyes swept inside.

Empty.

No Weasley.

His shoulders relaxed. At least he wouldn't have to deal with her.

The trunk snagged against the doorway with a dull bang. The girls looked up from their magazines. He yanked it free, his satchel slipping from his shoulder.

Once he finally freed the trunk, he spared the girls one last glance.

He would rather drown than spend seven hours sharing a compartment with Gryffindors.

Near the back of the train they found an empty compartment. A stale smell lingered from the nearby loos.

With little effort he lifted his trunk above the seating, tucking it neatly into the woven rope shelf.

He made a grab for Sam's trunk as well.

She slapped his hands away and glared.

Scorpius shrugged before slouching down in the window seat.

He watched as she hoisted her trunk onto the shelf. She plumped down into the seat across from him, stretching out her legs, letting them comfortably rest in his lap.

Scorpius' eyes drifted out onto the platform. Sunlight streamed through the glass roof, scattering into a myriad of colours.

Scorpius stared, mesmerised.

He glanced at his watch.

It was five to eleven.

His gaze drifted over the crowd.

Scorpius noticed a young boy, presumably a first year considering he was already dressed in his robes. He watched as the boy refused to let go of his mother's sleeve, tugging it, and her towards the train doors.

She swatted him away, hugging him.

Reassuring him.

They were not saying goodbye forever, only for a while.

Scorpius looked away.

At the edge of the platform he spotted his father. His face was laced in concern. One hand gripped his walking stick, the other tightly gripping Virginia's shoulder. The glass swallowed every word. All Scorpius could make out were Virginia's flailing arms and the furrow between his father's brows.

He caught movement in the corner of his eye.

The Weasley Family.

Above the clouds of fog he saw them coming. Their mops of red hair made them impossible to miss. Each member of the family was carrying multiple bags and trunks, nearly buckling under the weight as they ran towards the train.

A whistle blew out loudly.

Lily Luna dropped a trunk and rushed to pick it up.

James and Fred darted between the families, tossing exploding snaps beneath unsuspecting feet. The nearby students jumped and scurried away.

Mrs. Potter caught a hold of James' ear, pulling him back to the group.

Albus stood among them, awkward as always. His hands clutched his weathered satchel tightly as it hung from his shoulder.

At the edge of the group he spotted Molly Weasley and Sal Montgomery, the head boy and girl.

Scorpius even glanced to Rose Weasley for a second.

She was catching her breath, securing a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Dominique had said something to her. She threw her hair back in laughter.

Though he couldn’t hear her, he knew that awful laugh as well as he knew his own voice.

She looked happy.

Scorpius pursed his lips.

He despised her happy glee. In his eyes she deserved to be utterly miserable at all times.

Just as his eyes were about to leave her form, he noticed it.

The small pin, shining in the sunlight.

He stared down at his own prefect pin.

Fuck.

There would be no avoiding Rose Weasley this year.

The compartment door burst open just as the train rolled out of the station.

"...I even heard she slept with him."

Lisa Müller strode inside without so much as looking at them, continuing the conversation she'd apparently been having with herself.

Bella came in behind her, wrestling a trunk through the doorway.

The moment she spotted Scorpius, she abandoned it.

"Scorpy!"

She flung herself at Scorpius.

He caught her like a ton of bricks.

"You never owl. I've been so worried."

"I'm fine," he muttered.

She pulled back just enough to look at him.

Her brow furrowed.

He held her gaze.

Neither of them spoke.

"...Honestly, though," Lisa continued, oblivious, "I heard it from Inez, and you can't believe a word she says."

Bella finally let him go and lowered herself into the seat beside Lisa, leaning back.

Scorpius exhaled.

Lisa was still talking.

He rolled his eyes.

He'd heard it all before.

Sam caught his eye.

She looked from Lisa to Bella before resting her elbow against the window.

"So," she said loudly enough to cut across the gossip, "how was your summer, Scor?"

His mouth opened.

Nothing came.

Bella was still watching him.

"Well..."

He swallowed.

"We stayed home this year."

Bella looked away.

"Skipped the Riviera."

He looked to Bella, but her eyes stayed fixed on the cracks between the floorboards.

"Practiced—umm—practiced some Quidditch, Orion wanted to—"

"—So... did you spend all summer writing that girl?" Lisa butted in.

"What girl?" Scorpius said firmly.

"Well, Bella mentioned you still send your pen-pal letters."

Lisa gestured to the girl. On Lisa’s face was a nasty grin. Scorpius found her to look quite ugly when she did that, which was most of the time.

"...And I trust everything she says. Why would she lie about her own family?"

"She's only a friend," Scorpius said through gritted teeth.

Sam adjusted her position, leaning into the conversation.

"From what you've said, she sounds pretty pathetic if you ask me. You never know, she might even be a Gryffindork."

Scorpius' eyes fell on his satchel.

The handle of his wand was peeking out.

If he could reach it he would hex Sam off the train.

Bella, who had folded her arms, lightly touched Scorpius' shoulder.

Every head turned at the sound of the compartment door gliding open.

Albus stood in the doorway. His eyes scanned the room, his hand rubbing the back of his neck.

"Mind if I—"

He pushed through the door with his trunk and satchel.

Sam raised her eyebrows at Scorpius, who rolled his eyes in return.

Albus pulled out a tray of Chocolate Cauldrons, popping one in his mouth.

"Anyone want one?"

He shoved the tray up in Sam's face.

"No..."

She slowly pushed it away in disgust.

Albus shrugged before picking up another one.

"Aren't you supposed to be at that prefect meeting, Scorp?"

He said it as he took a bite, the first one not yet chewed.

Scorpius glanced down at his watch.

Five past eleven.

Shit.

Scorpius hurried out of his seat, his satchel spilling out as he bent down to pick it up.

He left it.

On his way out he let the compartment door slam shut.

He stopped outside of the carriage. Muffled voices bled through the glass door. He spotted the other prefects. Sal and Molly were stood at the back of the carriage, a blank blackboard behind them. He caught his reflection in the nearby window. Bella's embrace had left a stubborn strand of platinum hair sticking up. He smoothed it back into place.

He slid the door open as quietly as he could. The gentle sound of the rolling wheels seemed unnaturally loud as it carried through the compartment.

Conversation died the moment he stepped inside. For a brief moment he just stared. Virginia rolled her eyes. Carefully, he made his way across the compartment. Every prefect watched him until he slipped into the last empty seat beside Penny Davis.

Out of the corner of his eye, he caught Weasley shooting him an annoyed look—

“–Nice of you to join us, Scorpius,” Molly said, her voice laced with clipped politeness.

“As I was saying... after reviewing everyone's schedules, we've decided to mix up the patrols.”

Molly snapped her finger at Sal, and the head boy tapped the blackboard with his wand. Names appeared in an orderly fashion.

“Davis and Smith, you have dungeon duty every Tuesday.”

Penny's face tensed, her wide eyes making her look uncannily like a mouse. Phillip Smith. Scorpius knew him, and wished he didn't. The boy carried an obnoxious grin wherever he went. Never had Scorpius met anyone quite so cocky. Why split up the house pairs in the first place—

“–Rose and Malfoy you’ll do the same route on Thursdays.”

His head snapped towards Molly.

One look at Weasley's face told him he hadn't misheard. She looked bloody furious. Judging by his clenched jaw, he probably looked the same.

The meeting carried on around him. Scorpius couldn't have repeated a single word. He couldn’t care less. It was as boring as looking after a flobberworm anyway.

"Molly, you can't possibly set me up with him," he heard Weasley mutter as the other prefects filtered out of the carriage.

Scorpius almost snorted.

He wasn't about to start his first argument with Weasley so early, and besides, for once she had a point. He lingered by the doorway, shuffling his feet, finding the window ledge particularly interesting.

“…That just proves that this is a good idea…”

The other prefects pushed past him.

“…you need to learn to work together Rosie.”

Scorpius could almost hear her roll her eyes at the mention of her nickname, it was the easiest way to agitate her.

Before long, apart from Molly and Weasley, he was the only one left at the front of the train.

“…One month okay,” Molly pleaded with her younger cousin.

There didn’t seem to be more discussion, or at least no answer that Scorpius was able to hear.

The rustle of bags made Scorpius straighten.

They were coming.

Ahead of him he noticed Penny. Quickly his feet pulled him towards her.

“H-how was your summer, Scorpius?” Penny asked, her voice trembling as though speaking to him required enormous courage.

Their conversations never seemed to progress beyond pleasantries. He tended to avoid them, but being stuck with Penny was better than getting stuck with Weasley.

“Same old,” he replied. “Bit of Quidditch and all that. How was yours?”

Penny tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

“Uhm... it was nice. Dad took me on this boat down the Amazon this summer. We were looking for—”

Scorpius' attention drifted over her shoulder.

Weasley was still behind them with Molly. She was smiling now, their argument apparently forgotten. Her hands moved animatedly as she spoke, tracing shapes through the air as though describing something racing past.

Penny kept talking.

“...and then we ended up in this little village where–”

Weasley had actually brushed her hair that morning. It wasn't its usual bird's nest.

The train lurched around a bend, and Scorpius caught himself against the compartment wall without taking his eyes off her.

“…then dad nearly steered the boat into a tree, only it wasn’t a tree–”

The corridor behind him was empty.

Weasley was gone. She'd probably disappeared into one of the compartments by now.

“…and then I finally got to see a real dragon–”

“That's great, Penny. My compartment's here. I'll see you at Hogwarts.”

Before she could answer, Scorpius slithered his way into the compartment. Penny's footsteps lingered outside for a moment before retreating back down the corridor.

He was shocked to find it filled to the brim. When he had left only Bella, Lisa, Sam and Albus had been there. Now his seat was occupied by the Gryffindors. Weasley’s friends.

The tall blonde one sat in his seat, filing her hot pink nails, her copy of *Teen Witch* abandoned across her lap. Bella was eyeing the discarded magazine like it was water in a desert.

Shaun, the Gryffindor keeper, sat opposite her talking to Albus and the small Indian girl about Quidditch. He couldn’t remember her name, but she was on the Gryffindor team, that much he knew.

“Scorpius, did you hear? Saira is the new Quidditch captain.”

Saira.

He took note of the name. Apparently, he would need to remember it now.

“Why are they all here,” he said.

“I thought maybe they could join us for once,” Albus said. “I never really get to sit with them.”

He glanced between Scorpius and the empty space beside him.

“And since you and Rose were both at the prefect meeting–”

“Scor is back now.”

Sam interrupted. Her glare could have frozen the whole compartment.

“…I just meant that I didn’t wanna force you guys, and then the meeting.”

Albus rambled on, his fingers adjusting his glasses.

“–We’ll have to now…”

Scorpius’ eyes flickered to his occupied seat.

The blonde girl had stopped filing her nails. Her attention had shifted entirely to him.

Not him, exactly.

The conversation.

Scorpius dropped down in an empty seat.

“…That stupid cousin of yours sat us up on patrols–”

“–What, is she insane,” the annoying seat-grabbing blonde girl spoke up.

“Yeah it’s absolutely ridiculous Gene,” Rose Weasley stood at the entrance of the compartment. Her hands seemed to gravitate towards her hips.

“Are you two actually agreeing on something,” said Albus.

“It’s quite easy to agree that we both despise each other,” Weasley stuck her tongue out in an act of immaturity.

“Hate is a better word,” Scorpius corrected.

“Girls, can we leave… this creature is giving me a headache.”

She didn’t even acknowledge him, she simply pointed to the seat he was sat in as if he was a blast-ended skrewt.

“Nobody’s stopping you,” added Sam.

“Actually. We were having a conversation…,” Albus drifted off.

The Gryffindors were already on the move.

The blonde girl, Gene, wiggled her way out of Scorpius’ seat, carefully avoiding his spilled out satchel.

The moment the door closed behind them Scorpius got out of his seat.

He scooped his possessions back into the satchel.

His hands lingered on the letter.

It was the last one Matilda had sent him before the summer break. He had read it so many times the corners were beginning to weather.

Once he had tidied it all up he got back into his usual place by the window.

It was quiet.

No one dared talk badly about the Gryffindors with Albus still there.

Scorpius looked out the window, he could see nothing but his own reflection.

The night fell quickly in the north during autumn, six pm, and still the sky had darkened profusely.

It meant they were closing in on Hogwarts.

Soon Scorpius would be home.

His mouth felt dry.

His eyes locked onto the... things in front of him.

Scorpius couldn’t stop staring at them.

Their knobbly knees and small skulls almost made his stomach turn. Leathery wings flapped around him as he made his way to the nearest carriage.

He clambered up and through the carriage door. His own breath sounded deafening as he sat down.

He looked towards the others filing into the carriage.

Could no one else see them?

Had he gone mad?

He attempted to focus on Albus in the seat opposite him.

His square glasses.

His unruly black hair.

Just above Albus’ head, he could see the carriage window.

The black back of the horrifying creature.

Why had he never seen them before?

The others were occupied with conversation. The muffled words and phrases dissolved into the ringing in his ears.

Had they always been there?

Matilda would help. She knew everything.

“Scorpius, are you okay?” Bella asked.

Her voice pulled him back.

“Yes,” he said, rather unconvincingly.

Bella’s brow furrowed.

“Are you sure?”

The carriage came to a halt.

“We are here. Ready for the feast?”

He said it while climbing over the others and forcing the carriage door open.

Scorpius straightened his back.

He heard the others’ footsteps as they strolled towards the castle, wanting nothing more than to get inside and eat.

He squeezed his eyes shut.

His hand reached into the carriage, desperately trying to grab his forgotten satchel.

He took a deep breath, knowing that he would soon see the full form of that horrid beast once again.

He stepped away from the carriage and turned to the creature, taking in its details.

It seemed to be made up of bones.

He couldn’t quite describe it.

There was no fur, only leathery skin stretched tightly against bones.

It looked almost slimy from afar.

Its head was a mix of a horse and a dragon.

The features were so horrible it was difficult to look away.

Before he knew it, it had left.

Bella yelled for Scorpius to follow and he turned towards the castle.

As he passed through the courtyard, he caught the curious look of Rose Weasley.

His jaw clenched.

He didn't need Weasley asking questions.

He didn't need her trying to solve his problems.

He strolled towards the castle as if nothing had happened, resisting the urge to look back at the carriages.

Every year the feast felt longer and longer.

Scorpius tried to pay attention to the sorting. He watched as the Sorting Hat appeared at the front of the hall, performing its yearly ritual.

The hat spent its one day out of storage gracing the students with its highly anticipated song, which this year was just as bad as the last. The hat sang while the students gawped at the newcomers.

Scorpius watched some of the third years; they were most likely choosing their new victims, while the second years looked relieved at the change.

Scorpius found the whole affair rather boring and monotonous.

They had, after all, been watching it since first year.

Following the sorting, Gryffindor seemed to have taken most of the first years, which only made him glad.

He would despise having to look after those young brats.

Professor McGonagall rose from the podium. Her demeanour alone was enough to silence the entire hall. Her stern glare made even the older students straighten.

Scorpius exchanged wary glances with his friends.

“Before we continue the feast, there are a few rules and restrictions that need to be addressed. The prefect bathrooms are not to be used by anyone who is not a prefect.”

McGonagall deliberately turned her head towards the Gryffindor table, where Fred and James were seated.

“Furthermore, due to recent circumstances, the west wing corridor on the fifth floor is out of bounds for all students. No student is to enter the Forbidden Forest without proper precautions and a professor present.”

Hogwarts was a school that prided itself on tradition.

McGonagall's expression softened slightly.

“The war left the wizarding world in a state of ruin... but also with the opportunity for change.”

Her eyes scanned the four tables.

Scorpius did the same.

Bella and Lisa were whispering at the Ravenclaw table, discreetly pointing out people around the room. Weasley was muttering to James and Fred through gritted teeth. Albus was absent. Scorpius wasn’t sure where he could have gone.

“…Hogwarts has made a promise to combat the ever-growing division between our houses. I welcome all first years to participate in our pen-letter program. Your head of house will explain further.”

She gave them all a tired smile.

“Very well.”

She flicked her wand.

Before Scorpius could so much as blink, the empty plates filled with mountains of food.

The few new Slytherin first years looked in awe at the display. Scorpius and his friends dug in without hesitation, already knowing exactly what to eat and what to avoid.

“That broccoli looks pretty good this year,” Derek mentioned, eyeing the green vegetable.

“You said so last year Santiago, and then you got sick all over the common room carpet,” Sam said with the look of disgust plastered on her face, “let’s not repeat last year.”

“It wasn’t that bad, the house-elves cleaned it up nicely,” Scorpius said.

“I can still picture it in my head,” Sam said with a shudder.

“Vale, vale. I’ll leave it.”

Derek abandoned the broccoli altogether and helped himself to the carrots.

The Great Hall buzzed with conversation.

Above them, the enchanted ceiling was dark, low clouds drifting across the enchanted sky. The air felt strangely heavy.

Perhaps it would rain before morning.

Bea was loudly explaining her summer break while Louis nodded along, absently running a hand through his long blond hair. Sam kept rolling her eyes while adding snarky interruptions, never letting Bea finish.

Derek and Charles were talking about the new Quidditch tactics and planning out the season. Scorpius tuned into their conversation.

“I heard Saira Patil is their new Quidditch captain,” Scorpius butted in.

“That mudblood,” Charles Zabini spat out.

“I think her mum’s a witch,” Derek added.

“Same thing,” Scorpius said, barely paying attention.

He took another bite of his roasted potatoes, missing the uncomfortable look Derek shot Charles.

“Either way, she's probably a dreadful captain. We've got this year in the bag.”

Charles smiled with a wicked grin. Sam seemed to agree, nodding her head.

Scorpius hoped Charles was right.

If anything went wrong, Charles was the captain.

None of the blame would fall on him.

He felt a light tap on his shoulder.

He turned around to find Penny there.

“Hi Penny,” he said in a cheery tone.

"Professor Purcey said we're supposed to escort the first years."

Penny looked at him expectantly.

"McGonagall hasn't dismissed us yet..."

The headmistress stood up to once again address the room.

In a matter of seconds the food all disappeared.

Scorpius spotted a few disappointed faces, and one of the Hufflepuffs bit into air with his food suddenly gone.

The rest of the students impatiently let the first years leave.

Scorpius and Penny had to push the kids around to get them to follow. When they first made it down to the dungeons, they all looked around in horror.

Once inside the common room, Scorpius felt at ease.

It was easily his favourite room in the entirety of Hogwarts.

The armchairs by the huge windows that viewed straight into the abyss of the Black Lake. It somehow made him calm. Above them, a silver chandelier twinkled like a million stars, covering the dark green walls.

Even the first years seemed less terrified now.

Scorpius and Penny handed them over to Professor Purcey, their flying instructor.

No one really knew how he had earned the title of Professor when he was only the flying instructor, but nobody seemed interested in questioning it. Scorpius had gathered it had to do with his position as Head of House Slytherin.

Scorpius took a seat in one of the armchairs.

He looked at his watch.

It was nearly ten.

He could hear Professor Purcey drone on and on about the common room as he toured the place for the newcomers.

Then Scorpius heard, for the fiftieth time, the story behind the pen-letter program.

His mind drifted to Matilda.

He had been standing in the same place as the new first years when Professor Purcey had given them their pen-pals. He had ripped open the paper only to read the name:

Matilda.

It sounded so simple.

Scorpius wondered how easily the name had come to her.

“...If a letter is sent before ten pm it will be sent directly to your pal’s bedside table...”

Scorpius glanced at his watch.

It was only a few more minutes until ten.

She had said she would write.

He reached for his satchel at the foot of the chair.

The worn letter, the one from fourth year.

It stated clearly that he would get a letter on the first evening.

“...If you can all scribble down a secret name on a piece of parchment and hand it to me within the next twenty minutes, I will be out of your way. You will get your pen-pal in the morning—”

Alexander plopped down in the chair across from Scorpius.

He didn’t say anything at first.

Despite being family, the two had never really gotten on, and Scorpius had no real intention or want to talk to his cousin this evening.

“Good break, Alex,” he said, only to break the silence.

“Didn’t Bella tell you all about it?”

Alex raised his eyebrows slightly.

“Yeah, she did.”

Scorpius got up from his seat, tucking the letter back into the satchel.

He glanced at his watch.

Two minutes till 10 pm.

“Scorpius...” Alex interrupted.

“I’m gonna go to my room.”

Scorpius hurried up the staircase, climbing two steps at a time.

The room looked deserted.

All of their previous decorations had to be taken down at the end of last term so that the house-elves could clean the dorm properly.

They hadn’t delivered his trunk yet, so Scorpius sat down in silence at his desk.

The clock was ticking down.

Soon it would be past ten, and yet there still was no letter.

As if the universe heard his thoughts, he could hear the swish of a letter airplane.

Neatly, it sailed through the air and stopped abruptly on his bedside table.

Unfolding itself.

Scorpius scrambled to his feet and made a grab for the letter.

The paper was smooth as he broke the seal.

Dear Hyperion,

Hope you are doing well and that you had a marvellous summer.

Like I said in my last letter, I was going to France this summer. One of my cousins lives there and I have never been.

It was so lovely. My dad drove the entire way, honestly I would rather he not. He just got his license at the start of the summer. You should have seen some of the towns we drove through,

they were all so picturesque. I might send you a postcard if I can find one in the mess of my trunk.

I met so many nice people as well. I don't know who said that the French are all bad, I think I might have even made some friends for life.

First I met Cristine and Audrey near Saint Maxime. They go to Beauxbatons and told me all about it. It's actually quite insane. They aren't allowed to play Quidditch there, but their uniforms are so cute.

Henry showed me around Cannes la Boca. He is a friend of my cousin, but he was so nice and helpful and we ended up walking in circles most of the time because he forgot what way we were supposed to go.

I tried to get my mum to take me to Beauxbatons, not that I would ever transfer, but it just looks so nice — well, a girl can dream.

Other than my trip, there isn't too much more to report.

How was your summer break? You said you were going to the Far East? Did you get to see the secret magic trading route? It is so fascinating. They used to export goods from the magical communities in China for hundreds of years.

I guess now most deliveries can be done through Portkeys and owls, but I did read that some exotic and valuable goods still need to be transported on that route.

Isn't that just fascinating? Did you say your sister wanted to work there? It sounds absolutely wonderful. I would love to hear if you saw any of that.

Okay, my question of the week: What bullshit Gilderoy Lockhart book is your favourite? Ironically, of course.

See you soon, Love, Matilda.

Chapter 2: Love, Rose

The sunlight burned on her face. The heat felt unbearable, even by Scottish standards. She winced as she tumbled out of bed. Her feet dragged over to the packed trunk. The neat black leather case had been stuffed to the brim less than twenty-four hours ago, each item placed meticulously.

Her hands skimmed over the top layer, brushing the soft wool of her sweater. She pulled it free, only to drop it onto the floor. Then the next item. Then another.

Soon the room was littered with school shirts, capes, her pointed hat—which she never bothered wearing—and assorted trinkets. It was a beautiful mosaic of mess.

Rose refused to dwell on the items scattered on the floor. She gathered as much clothes as she could before dumping them all on the bed. Quickly she sorted through the them, finding a white button-up shirt, her usual grey skirt and the gold and red tie. She failed to find any stockings, but the professors probably wouldn't notice.

The dormitory was unusually quiet.

Rose looked over her shoulder. Both of the other beds had their curtains open. Neither could she hear the usual drip of their dormitory shower. That meant she was alone.

Her eyes glanced at the clock on her nightstand.

Breakfast would be over in thirty minutes so if she wanted her schedule and a bite of food in her stomach before the first class she needed to hurry up.

Next to her alarm-clock she spotted it, the reply.

Immediately she grabbed it, sitting down among the cluttered bed. Her fingers tore the envelope open before she carefully pulled it out. Her movement slowed down as she handled the letter. Her thumb lifted the folded paper.

The words were all blurry.

Rose shook her head before reaching for the reading glasses next on the nightstand. The adrenaline of it all had gotten the best of her. She still needed her glasses to read.

Dear Matilda,
I am fine, summer was busy. I am glad to be back.
Q: I don't know.
-H

Rose threw the letter into the pile of clothes in frustration.

That's it, she thought as she sighed heavily.

She pulled on her button-up. They had not spoken for months. The buttons were frustratingly difficult to do up. He didn't give her more than three lines.

As she pulled on her skirt the zipper got stuck.

Did he not care?

She made a grab for her book bag, slamming it as violently as one could into the fluffy bed. He hadn't acted like this in years, she thought.

She began stuffing the bag.

She had written every week.

Every single week.

Rose added three rolls of parchment. She put immense effort into each letter. A quill and bottle of ink went in next. And all he would give her was three measly lines.

She shoved in her textbooks.

What if something was wrong?

She paused.

Perhaps it was.

But why would he not say?

Gently she placed her scarf at the top of the already full bag.

There couldn't be anything wrong with Hyperion, he would have told her.

A smile crept up on her face.

He would have told her.

As she lifted the bag her smile faded quickly.

Underneath the heavy satchel was the letter. It was riddled with creases that spread out like tree branches, etching its way into the paper forever. In a futile attempt she grabbed the note and attempted to brush out the wrinkles to no avail.

Carefully Rose put the note in her bag before heading out of the dorm room.

It was a fine autumn day.

There was a certain chill to the stone-clad castle, but the sun was still shining. Summer only ended two days ago, but in Scotland you never knew when you would see the sun or have a full on thunderstorm, it could all happen in the same day.

Rose brushed her fingers over the woollen fabric of her grey skirt. It had some fuss on it from being stored in her trunk, nothing that magic couldn’t fix. Her shirt had wrinkles in it which made her look really unprofessional, her mother would be very disappointed if she could have seen her now.

She resisted the urge to run back upstairs.

There wasn't time to change, even if she desperately wanted to.

Though it was merely fifteen minutes till nine, not everyone seemed to be rushing towards the Great Hall for breakfast. Rose could hear chatter of students discussing food as she made her way through the common room.

James attempted to stop her, asking if she had any dung bombs left over from her secret stash. She did not have a secret stash, and if she did she would not have any left.

She climbed through the portrait hole and made her way towards the Great Hall, she still had fifteen minutes left of breakfast.

The halls were filled with students walking to their first classes already. She passed Lily who exclaimed,

"Can you come help in the library this afternoon."

She promised she would, her younger cousin was starting her electives, Rose knew how difficult Magic Runes could be.

A first year followed her from the sixth floor all the way to the fourth floor before she turned around and asked where the poor boy was going. She pointed him towards the greenhouses before continuing on to the Great Hall.

On the second floor the corridors were more crowded. She felt her bag snag at multiple students passing her. Like a sea of fish she was walking against the stream.

A voice called out.

"Rose!"

She could barely turn around without suffocating.

"Later!"

She could only see the back of the person’s head. All she caught was a flash of red hair.

Sibling or cousin?

She could figure it out later.

"Rose!"

"Find me at dinner!" She called out, pushing her way through the mass.

She squeezed her way into a hidden corridor, a shortcut she knew would take her directly towards the Great Hall. The corridor was narrow. There were no lanterns or torches guiding her way, only the little light that shone from the main corridor, and had managed to creep its way into the passage.

She had nearly made it without incident before she ran into Scorpius Malfoy.

Sprawled on the cold stone floor she was only able to glare at him.

“Watch where you’re going” he said with venom. His bag had spilled out its contents.

“Me! You ran me over, walking so fast,” Rose managed to get up from the floor, with no help from Malfoy of course.

She could already hear the insult forming.

Ferret.

Weasel.

Something childish.

They always fought like this. Even Rose had to admit that most of their arguments were quite trivial, but he always riled her up. There was no way of avoiding confrontation when it came to Scorpius Malfoy.

She looked down at him, struggling to collect his belongings. Books, parchment, letters and quills.

For a moment she almost bent to help him, the lack of light made it difficult to gather it all.

She shrugged.

He could manage.

“Just leave me alone, Weasley,” He said simply before wandering off.

Rose stood and watched him. Quickly he was but a shadow.

He never left an argument.

They always fought.

That was their thing.

It was just part of normal life at Hogwarts.

He was just having a bad day.

Tomorrow he'd probably call her insufferable and she'd hex him.

Everything would go back to normal.

“I just don’t understand why he wrote that,” Rose flopped down in a seat next to Genevieve, exclaiming loudly her recent distain for her writing partner.

Like always, Genevieve Finnigan was the unlucky recipient of Rose’s frustrations. She was attempting to read her *Witch Weekly* magazine in peace while stuffing a spoonful of scrambled eggs in her mouth.

“Are you sure he meant it like that,” She lazily flipped the page of her magazine.

Rose glanced over the pages. The special of the week was a full spread on how ‘*they are all like us*’ with photos of Wizarding World celebrities.

One of the photos was of Victorie and Teddy at a restaurant.

Gene studied the image closely.

She gasped.

“You didn’t tell me your cousin’s getting married,” She exclaimed in joy.

Really it was none of Gene’s business that her cousin was getting married.

Rose blinked.

"What?"

"Victoire."

"Oh. Yeah. Next summer."

Rose rummaged through her bag looking for the letter.

“You’ll have to invite me! I can already picture the dress in my mind,”

Rose tuned her out.

Gene kept talking.

Dresses.

Flowers.

Invitations.

Rose barely heard any of it as she pulled out her satchel.

“Sure. Gene I’m gonna find the letter and you can tell me what you think,” Rose dug deeper in her bag.

Albus walked up to her.

“Rosie,” he said, a bite of toast still unchewed.

“Al, don’t speak with food in your mouth.”

She stuffed her hand into the bag and pulled out a slightly crumpled letter.

“I’ll try and get the creases out,” she shrugged and handed it to Gene.

While she read over the letter Rose straightened out Al’s tie.

“It really isn’t that bad, on paper things always seems worse,” she reassured.

“What is it,” Al said after taking another bite of his marmite toast.

Al looked over Gene’s shoulder, skimming the letter.

“Yeah, I think you’re overreacting Rose,”

Professor Longbottom strolled past them, handing out class schedules to all the Gryffindors.

“Uncle Neville,”

Professor Longbottom turned on his heel.

“Albus, you got to remember we’re at school,” he said with a small smile.

“Sorry,” Al mumbled, “Professor Longbottom. Have you seen Alice anywhere,” He asked, shuffling his feet.

Gene's hand had suspiciously stopped flipping her magazine.

“She said she was catching up on some school work in the library,” He said with a wink before leaving the teens alone.

Albus’ head whipped around.

“What’s the schedule.”

Gene handed Rose a piece of parchment.

Rose stared down at the schedule, at least there was only one class with Slytherin that day.

“Umm…Charms with the Ravenclaws,” she answered.

“Cool,” Al started walking away.

“Wait Al,” Rose got up of her seat, reclaiming the letter from Gene.

The two of them walked out of the Great Hall together.

“Do you mean it, that I’m overreacting.”

Al took the last bite of his toast.

“You kinda always do,” he laughed. “You know, you could like, figure out who this H guy is. Tell him who you are, then you won’t have to solve some puzzle every time you get a letter–,”

“Absolutely not,” she folded her arms.

Al shrugged at her.

“Suit yourself.” He said walking away in the direction of the library.

She felt her stomach growl.

She had totally forgotten about the breakfast.

Her eyes glanced at her watch.

One minute till nine.

Class didn’t start until a quarter past and the breakfast wouldn’t vanish from the golden trays until nine.

She sprinted back through the doors of the Great Hall.

Just as she reached her hand towards the french toast, it disappeared.

Great.

Her stomach growled.

It was going to be a long day.

Her first class of the day was Charms with the Ravenclaws. Dominique was quick to grab the seat next to Rose.

“Did you see the *Witch Weekly* spread,” Dominique gushed.

Rose rolled her eyes at the girl. “Yes, don’t you think it is a bit over the top,” Rose searched her bag for parchment and a quill. “Bugger,” she said, grabbing a broken quill from her bag. “Have you got a spare.”

Dominique silently handed her another one.

“Thanks,” She mumbled, the balanced the quill between her lips while she concentrated on pulling her hair into a pony tail.

“I think it was a rather nice scene they captured of the two of them,” Dominique shrugged. “Mama can’t stop talking about the wedding of course, even though it isn’t for months. You don’t mind helping with the planning do you, I know Victorie would appreciate your skills,” Dominique scrunched up her nose in a smile, her eyes nearly disappearing.

Rose watched as the other Gryffindors and Ravenclaws piled into the room. Saira and Gene moved towards her. She spotted Alice, but she was talking intensely with Jordan without so much as glancing Rose’s way.

“Of course, I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

Professor Flitwick was rather distracted that morning. He wouldn’t quite get to the point of the lesson until it was nearly over. They were supposed to have a revision on last year’s curriculum, mostly the Summoning charm, but by the end of the lesson Rose had only written down three sentences. Three measly lines.

Her mind drifted to the letter from that morning, which was still securely in her satchel. She wondered if Hyperion was in the room with them now. Perhaps the boy she had been writing since first year was Phillip Smith.

She cringed.

“Are you okay,” Dominique whispered while Flitwick wasn’t looking.

Rose nodded. No she really hoped it wasn’t Phillip Smith, he gave her the creeps and in third year she had watched him dig out a booger and eat it.

Jordan he was nice, and funny. You had to be with a name like Jordan Jordan. Rose didn’t really know him though, only from a few Christmas parties their families had attended together.

Dominique bumped Rose’s shoulder.

“Huh,” Rose’s eyes shot up at Dominique.

“Lesson’s over,” she smiled and the two of them walked out of the classroom.

The four girls walked together for as long as they could. Dominique was off to DADA with the Hufflepuffs, but talked adamantly with Saira about the upcoming Gobstones meeting until their paths drifted off into separate directions.

The dungeons were cold and damp as the three girls made their way down. Rose didn’t particularly enjoy the dungeons, though on the rare warm days in late spring she couldn’t deny that it wasn’t comfortable with the cooling air.

As they walked into the potions classroom Saira went straight up to Professor Patil. Padma wiped away some dirt Saira inevitably had managed to get on her face, and she cringed away

from her mother. Rose and Gene grabbed the first table, and another one for Saira and Shaun.

However it didn't last long.

Once all the Slytherins had entered Professor Patil announced, much to Rose's dismay, that she had split the houses into pairs which would last both terms.

According to Professor Patil she had based them off of previous scores and merit, but Rose doubted that as she took a seat next to Malfoy.

She glared at him.

He didn't even spare her a glance.

Nothing.

Fine then.

"What are you looking at," he bit at her under his breath.

"So it does speak," she humoured him.

Professor Patil had just read up the final pair and the others had situated themselves at the workstations.

"This upcoming year is the most important for you future," Padma eyed the students, "I remember my own fifth year, the nerves of doing well on your O.W.L.S. If you want to continue into N.E.W.T level potions you will need to preform well this year."

She flicked her wand and instructions appeared on the black board.

"This is the wit-sharpening potion, I thought we shall start off with something slightly easier to ease you into the semester. Very well, as you were," she said and the other students began collecting the ingredients needed to brew the potion.

Malfoy wasn't even looking at her. Was he still annoyed from that morning?

She watched as he walked back and forth to the supply closet, each time returning with a new ingredient.

She hadn't done anything wrong.

"Aren't you gonna do something," he said, not even glancing up at her.

No, he was the one that had practically walked straight at her.

"You would like that wouldn't you. I think you will benefit from this potion. Wit-sharpening, you could really use that," she crossed her arms and looked up at the black board.

Malfoy had collected all the ingredients. Sometimes she couldn't believe that git, did he thing she was useless.

She grabbed a hold of the ginger root before he could and started chopping it up.

He added the armadillo bile before she could, even though she had already prepared it. At least she managed to drop in the ground Scarab beetle.

He stirred it, still not saying a single word.

“You’re remixing it too much, it’s only supposed to yellow. Now it’s starting to look green,” she said.

He rolled his eyes at her and said, “perhaps you should add in the ginger then.”

As Rose added the last of the ginger, she thought that Professor Patil ought to split up the pairs as soon as possible.

Lunch was as uneventful as last years Quidditch match between Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff. Nobody seemed to want to start the conversation. Rose sat in silence nearly the entire meal.

At one point Hugo had come up to her, he wanted her old Gobstones so he could join the team. She had simply said that he would need to ask again later as they were somewhere in her trunk.

Shaun had inhaled a little too much fumes from Potions and began speaking so eloquently nobody could understand him. Dominique had sat next to Rose again and told her about the first Herbology lesson, Neville had made them start growing Gillyweed from seeds, which wouldn’t be ready until the start of October.

Albus rushed in, late for lunch, which Rose knew he hated. His eyes searched the Great Hall, in the end he sat down next to Malfoy. Malfoy was gleaming as he started talking to Al and the rest of his mates. Apparently he wanted to talk to everyone except for Rose.

Rose rolled her eyes at him before taking a big bite of her potato salad.

After lunch Rose had only one more class before she would be free to refamiliarise herself with the castle.

It was of course the worst possible class.

Professor Binns droned on and on about the 3rd Dwarf war for an hour and a half. Most of Rose’s classmates dipped off at various points throughout the lesson. Saira and Shaun were throwing a quaffle across the classroom for most of it. While Genevieve used the opportunity to paint her nails.

Rose looked at Professor Binns. Sometimes she wondered if he knew that he was a ghost. She knew it was a highly debated topic at Hogwarts. How could he not know? It was right in front of him. Every single day. Rose would definitely know if she was a ghost. She gathered he didn’t care. He got to stand at the front of the classroom every single day and bore every student that graced the Hogwarts grounds with his ridiculous History of Magic.

Rose ran out of the classroom. Had she been brave enough she would've left during class, Professor Binns didn't seem to know the difference. She climbed up two flights of stairs before Binns could even float past her. The trick step on the third floor nearly got to her, but she got to the fourth floor just as the corridors began to fill with the rest of the students who had finished their classes for the day.

She bursted through the door to the library as she got in. The smell of parchment and paper overtook her senses. The peace and quiet was overwhelming.

She beelined for the back of the library. After years of experience she knew this to be the quietest part, the less distractions the better. Once her stuff was situated at the large mahogany table she pulled out the heaviest looking book she could find, a tired book of monsters which seemed to be at its best behaviour. She pulled out her crinkled letter before placing the heavy book on top of it.

Lily turned the corner into the little alcove, just as the letter was hidden out of view.

"Rose, thank Merlin you are here," she slumped down into a chair opposite Rose. "I don't understand a single word of these ancient runes."

Lily pushed her homework in Rose's direction.

It was child's play.

Within twenty minutes Rose had explained the theory and the processes in the greatest detail possible. She did not notice that Lily looked slightly disappointed when Rose handed her back her unfinished work.

Lily stared at it blankly, "I think I get it, the Fwopper represents 0, and the unicorn 1 because of the horn–"

Rose made a grab for the parchment once more, scribbling in the margins of the assignment.

"No, the Demiguise is a 0, you are correct about the unicorn. But the Fwopper is–"

"I was thinking…that maybe… well if it isn't too much, if you could help me with Scorpy," a quiet whisper caught Rose's attention.

She silently gave Lily her parchment back. The younger girl smirked and started ferociously noting down different words and phrases.

Rose had gotten up from her seat, moving closer and closer to the sound.

"Whatever could that be for," Samantha Zabini responded in her typical drawl.

Rose watched the two girls through the bookshelf. Bella Nott was fiddling with her long black hair.

"So, Scorpy is just a bit down… if you hadn't noticed. And well, I was thinking maybe we could host a party or something. Actually probably Vivi and Ori too, to be honest. Their

summer was… Well. Something to lift their spirits, I guess,"

Rose could just barely spot Zabini's face. Her features were distorted in its usual growl — though she looked almost as if she were to laugh.

"Why are you asking me? Can't you host a party yourself," She said with a mocking tone.

"I'm a Ravenclaw, and people listen to you. It would have to be in the dungeons anyway. Can you just do it, please."

Rose leaned onto the bookshelf and in a moment of clumsiness a book fell off the shelf.

"What was that," Samantha snapped.

In a panic of hurry Rose ran back to her spot. She couldn't hear anything around her, the adrenaline from it all making her feel dizzy.

As speedy as she could, she picked up her bag, brushing her supplies into it. She muttered a quick goodbye to Lily before running off. Her cousin yelled something after her, but Rose was too busy escaping.

Unfortunately enough for Rose her day was not yet over. After the disaster at the library she had barely even wanted to go down for dinner, but she had to. She had handed over her old Gobstones to Hugo, while Lily had discreetly handed Rose back her crumbled letter. Lily had sworn she hadn't read it, but Rose didn't really trust the girl.

"You shouldn't be eating that," she slumped down in a seat across from Albus.

"Why…," he said while spitting out microscopic pieces of food that Rose had to brush off.

"I read in the *Quibbler* that the Hobnotch is farmed in order to create the spice used in fire-bred eggs. And they are kept in tiny tiny cages, and horrible conditions—,"

"Rose, I stopped listening after *Quibbler*," Albus rolled his eyes.

Rose spent the rest of the meal in silence, dreading her upcoming patrols with Malfoy.

"You could try and beg Molly to switch the patrols," Albus said.

"I promise Al, I've already tried. She is not budging. She probably wants to prove something."

"Prove what," Al continued, his food still not chewed.

"The sexual tension between them," Rose nearly spat out her drink when Gene interrupted.

"Absolutely not Gene." Rose glared at her.

Saira was smirking at Rose. Those two were trouble.

"Rose, I know you hate the bloke, but you can't deny he's delicious."

Gene made Rose want to puke. Albus raised his eyebrows at Gene.

"Don't ever say those words to me again."

The three of them laughed loudly at her expense. Albus turned quiet the moment Alice sat down next to him. His gaze completely enthralled by her.

“How was Herbology,” Rose asked politely.

Alice went off on a tangent about the properties of Gillyweed, which she was was looking forward to trying once the plant had fully grown. Neville had apparently promised them they would do a lesson out in the Black Lake once it had matured. Neville was absolutely bonkers. Rose had no intensions of swimming in the Black Lake in the middle of October.

Rose spent the hours leading up to the patrol in the Gryffindor common room. Roxy gave her a sample of Uncle George’s newest product, a hair shining and straightening cream.

“You can have that one, I got so many,” she said as she handed the tube over.

She had managed to get Fred to play wizard chess with her, but he just kept on cheating.

She glanced at the time, it was nearly eleven. She sighed as she got up, thanked Fred for the rounds and started walking towards the dungeons. The cold dark corridors would be her home for the next two hours. The longest two hours of her life.

As she made her way down to where their patrols would start Bella’s words swirled around in her head. ‘*Feeling down*’ for Malfoy probably meant that his house-elf hadn’t made his favourite meal last week, or something equally ridiculous. Once she got to their agreed-upon meeting place Rose wondered if seeing himself in an apron was Scorpius Malfoy’s biggest fear. In Rose’s opinion he seemed just as arrogant as he had at the end of the last year.

She was honestly surprised to that Malfoy even managed to be late. Rose had to descend nine flights of stairs, most of which had difficult trip steps and narrow ledges. Malfoy was practically in his own backyard.

“Took you long enough,” she spit out as she saw his combed-back hair round the corner.

“Can we just get this over with, preferably in silence”.

Rose glared at him again. He really had the audacity to shut her up after making her wait for him.

She kept her mouth shut.

“Suits me well, just be on time next week, otherwise I’ll report you and get a decent partner.”

They walked a few more meters, he had taken to walking a fair bit in front of her.

“Nothing would please me more,”

She could practically see him roll his eyes.

Just as they had peeked into the first room on their patrol Rose spoke again.

“Especially since I’m hear you’re sooo down. Bet you it was cause you had to pack your trunk all by yourself,”

He turned to face her, she simply flashed him a smirk.

“Can’t you be a big boy Malfoy, or do you need your mommy to do everything for you–”

“I don’t need my mommy.”

Rose nearly fell over as Malfoy got right up in her face.

“Calm down Malfoy, can’t you take a fucking joke,” her eyes widened in surprise, Malfoy didn’t give her a second glance, already moving towards the next room.

Malfoy was still sulking, whatever his problem was he had to get over it.

He turned, already at the end of the corridor, “come on Weasley, or I’ll report you to you cousin.”

Rose gritted her teeth, but followed. This Merlin-forsaken patrol was about to last forever.

Just as Rose had predicted the patrol was some of the slowest moving hours of her life. However, Albus would be proud. The two of them had never gone that long without biting each others heads off. Somehow they had managed to stay quiet for the rest of the patrol. She wished she could’ve spent the time better, doing useful things, like quidditch practice or homework, writing Hyperion.

They had yet to encounter any misbehaviour in the corridors on the first proper night back to Hogwarts. There was only a few stray first years who didn’t know their ways to their common rooms just yet. Malfoy had cruelly wanted to punish the children and take away points, but Rose thought it ought to be much better to show them the way back home. However, nothing Malfoy said ever surprised her anymore.

Chapter 3: Scorpius POV: The titan of the fallen stars

They all gathered outside of Hagrid's hut. It was a chill September morning. The sun was set low in the sky, still ascending. Scorpius eyed the boxes that were placed in front of them. Something was moving inside of them.

"What do you think it is?" he said in a quizzical tone.

He turned towards Al, only to be met by Weasley.

"What are you doing here, Malfoy?"

A sneer was present on her face, as she responded in that judging tone of hers.

He paused. His eyes drifted towards the rest of the class. He spotted Albus next to that Gryffindor brat, Genevieve… something. How he wished Sam was here. He knew she wouldn't be caught dead touching animals though.

He raised his eyebrows at Weasley.

Why was he here?

Scorpius didn't particularly mind Care of Magical Creatures. It was an enjoyable class. With the stress of most other O.W.L.s, Hagrid and the nature of being outside gave Scorpius some breathing room.

"It's an easy O, but you wouldn't know anything about that, off in the library studying just so you can keep up with me."

Hagrid waved them over to the biggest box before Weasley could respond. Scorpius walked off, the mulchy ground crunching under his feet.

"Yeh ready?" Hagrid called out to the group.

The half-giant held a large crowbar in his hands. The students looked around nervously as he pried open the boxes.

"There yeh have't."

He gestured to the open box and they all moved in to have a peek.

Blast-ended Skrewts.

Great.

Scorpius was going to have his hair singed off.

“Go inter pairs, and yeh will have ’bout two month to feed ’em. O’ course I want yeh to enjoy, but ’spect them creatures not to die.”

Albus waved Scorpius over to his crate.

“You wanna work together?”

He started opening the box using a crowbar, similar to Hagrid. However, unlike Hagrid, Albus was not half-giant, and not very strong for being a human either.

Scorpius took out his wand and muttered a small unlocking charm.

“I guess so.”

He looked into their box. They weren’t too large yet, but they would grow over time. At the moment, they weren’t even that dangerous. But once you encountered a one metre long Skrewt, that was another story.

The class went faster than Scorpius had expected, especially considering that there was little to no work to be done. The first thirty minutes they had spent throwing some feed into the enclosure. They were nearly newborns, slimy and headless. They stumbled into each other looking for the feed.

The last sixty minutes of class Al and Scorpius spent trying to figure out what to call the little guys.

Weasley had been a downright bitch when she had heard Al and him goofing around, and even had the audacity to ask Scorpius to quiet down.

“Aight, that’ll be all for yeh first class. Make sure yeh don’t leave them buggers starving. I’ll give them some extra fodder, but yeh’r welcome to go pet them anytime yeh wants to.”

Scorpius looked in disgust down at little Timmy, Goldilocks and Titan. There was no way he would be back to pet them before the next class.

“What you got now?”

Al slung his weathered bag over his shoulder.

Scorpius looked distracted over at Hagrid. The half-giant was waving the others off towards the castle.

“Uhh. Free period, I think.”

His ink bottle spilled all over the bag.

“Damn it.”

He cursed to himself before pulling out his wand, but Al was quicker. Al managed to complete the incantation and the ink vanished.

“Al, you could’ve just done Reparo, that was really nice quality ink.”

“–Oh cry me a river, come on Scor.”

Al began the trek towards the school. Scorpius followed, his feet stumbling up the stone steps.

He looked down to Hagrid again.

“Hagrid knows a lot about creatures?”

The question was rhetorical.

“No kidding, he probably knows about them all. Might be why they made him Care of Magical Creatures professor.”

“Yeah… right.”

Scorpius stopped in his tracks, the other students bumping straight into him.

“Malfoy, do you think you own the path?”

“Shut up, Weasley. Al, you go ahead without me… I forgot something.”

Scorpius turned on his heel and ran straight towards Hagrid. The others thought him mad.

As he hit the grassy patch he slowed down.

This was a stupid mistake.

His grip tightened around his book bag, the clammy hand sticking to the leather.

He could turn around now, if he wanted to.

Hagrid stood by the first crate, throwing in some fodder for the creatures.

“Hagrid… coul-em— could I ask a question?”

“Lemme set this down.”

He dropped the bucket to his side.

“Wha’ was it?”

Hagrid smiled brightly, but it was quickly replaced by a frown from the nervous look on Scorpius’ face.

“Summat wrong?”

Hagrid seemed to crouch down slightly.

“I just wondered about… those creatures.”

“The Skrewts?” Hagrid asked.

“No, the ones pulling the carriages,” Scorpius said.

“Thestrals, majestic creatures, aren’t them. Most folk can't see ’em. Yeh only do after yeh've seen death.”

Death.

The word had lodged itself into Scorpius’ chest.

“…My father died. Suddenly seein’ ’em winged creatures gave me quite the fright…”

Hagrid’s words bled into one another, the words seemingly no longer carrying any meaning.

He clenched his fist, digging the nails into the soft tissue.

“…If ye’re interested, Newt Scamander got a real nice chapter on ’em.”

The half-giant looked at Scorpius with quite a concerned look.

“Scorpius… Everything alright there? Anything happened?”

His head pounded at the thought.

Yes.

Everything.

Scorpius was well on the way to panicking at this point. He could feel the pain in his palm, grounding him.

“No sir, it was nothing. I just… learned about it… somewhere.”

Scorpius adjusted his satchel, his feet itching to turn away.

“Someone… don’t remember who… said the Thestral-things pulled the carriages.”

Hagrid put his hand on Scorpius’ shoulder in a comforting gesture.

“Well, if ye need to talk, ye know where to find meh.”

Scorpius didn’t need to find Hagrid.

He needed to find Newt Scamander.

The heavy oak doors of the library felt particularly heavy as he attempted to regain his breath. His feet shuffled through the door into the nearly empty library. He stopped for a moment.

The smell of parchment swept over him.

He stared out at the library.

The large room, with countless shelves, corridors and minor passages.

Where could he possibly begin?

It wouldn't be in the far right corner, that was History of Magic. He knew the library like the back of his hand.

Think.

Next to the Transfiguration essays by Filbert Polumius?

No.

On the shelf opposite the Restricted Section… no, that was where—

He knew.

His feet moved again, down the main bookshelves, to the left, down three passages, and through the small gap between Romilda Gordie and Kilroy Smith's shelves of books.

There, behind the grand mahogany table, was the shelf dedicated to Care of Magical Creatures.

He skimmed the shelf.

Q…

R…

S—

Sande—

Scaborelli—

Scamander.

He pulled out *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. The copy was weathered, nearly falling apart at the spine. He held it together before chucking it down on the desk.

His eyes followed his finger as he searched for the word.

Thestrals.

There.

Page 540.

He turned to the page, desperate yet careful not to destroy the book any more.

Page 540.

Thestrals.

In big, bold letters.

His eyes surveyed the page.

"*The Thestrals possess an interesting camouflage. Only visible to those who have witnessed, and understood death.…*"

He looked up from the page.

Understood death.

He didn't understand death, he didn't accept it.

"*…The use of Thestrals used to be more widespread, however declining death rates, childhood mortality and prolonged lifespans have made the creatures more rare to the naked eye.…*"

He turned the page. The illustration of the winged beast evoked in him the disgust he so rarely wanted to express about fantastical beasts.

How could he not blame this manifestation of literal death?

"*Many have attempted to rid themselves of the ability to see Thestrals. Potionmaker Demetrius Redwood created in 1574 a potion meant to take away the sight of Thestrals, the potion left him blind for the remainder of his life… Goodwin Plymouth, the curse-breaker, searched for magical artefacts but she procured nothing… Polander 'Pounce' Mungos famously attempted a trial treatment regarding Thestrals in 1934 to no luck… In conclusion, there is no cure for the sight of Thestrals, as meeting death is a natural part of life.…*"

He slammed the book.

He didn't need this stupid book any longer.

"Of course it's you."

Rose Weasley barged into the small alcove.

"Damaging books ought to be a crime."

She dropped her book bag and spread out her notes and research onto the large desk.

"Also, you are in my section. Don't you usually sit next to the Legilimency books?"

Rose already had a feather quill in hand, writing notes onto a worn parchment.

His eyes fixated on Newt's book.

“Sod off, Weasley.”

His voice was small, barely above a whisper.

The scratch of the quill went quiet.

Rose looked up. He could sense her eyes on him.

His fingers clutched the rough surface of the cover, tracing the author’s name.

She glanced down at her notes, then a moment later her eyes were trained on him again.

For only a split second, his eyes bore into hers.

“Right—”

She hesitated.

“I… Well—”

She straightened her back, returning to her work.

“You don’t own the library, Malfoy.”

A moment later, the scratch of the quill filled the silence again.

Scorpius pushed his chair back with a screech.

His hands forcibly picked up the book.

He let his eyes linger on the cover once more before he shoved it back into place.

“I’ll leave you to it.”

He slung his bag over his shoulder, gripping it hard as he left the books and Rose Weasley behind.

The kitchens were dark. Illuminated only by a single candlelight.

Scorpius watched the flame.

It danced in front of him. Growing larger, then shrinking.

The sound of a cup sliding across the table awoke him from his trance. He glanced at Winky, who had already moved away from him.

The house-elves never bothered him.

Once in his third year he had stayed down in the kitchens for the entirety of a month. There had been a resurgence in Death Eater trials, and his father had, without provocation, run the risk of being imprisoned. He couldn't take everyone's judgemental stares, their snide comments during meals.

He picked up Winky's cup of chocolate. It went down easy.

His meal, not so much.

His fork pushed the food around the plate, as if it would make it disappear.

Dinner was probably over by now.

He had skipped his DADA class following the free period. There would most likely be multiple repercussions. A detention from Professor Potter, perhaps.

But Scorpius had not a care in the world.

How could he?

There were much more important things than boggarts and trolls.

Absentmindedly he lifted his fork, just as the portrait door swung open. The pear's high-pitched laugh bled into the calm quiet of the kitchen.

"I thought I'd find you here."

The blonde-haired girl strode in with confidence. She slid into the seat across from him, taking his plate and stealing a bite.

"You know, it is rather antisocial to sulk down in the kitchens."

She took another bite, wolfing down the food.

"What do you want, Virginia?"

His downcast eyes met hers.

Her smile faded.

She set the fork down and pushed the plate aside. Her hands reached across the table and took his before he could pull them away.

"Are you okay, Scor?"

He clenched his eyes tight.

"Yes, I'm… I needed a break from… everything."

"Scor…"

She let her grip go, yet still held onto his hands, her thumb stroking the back of his hand.

They sat like that for a while.

Winky arrived with another hot chocolate, one for each of them.

Virginia finally let go of him and picked up her cup.

“You know, I think she would be very proud of you. Prefect and all.”

His eyes glanced down at the emerald pin on his chest.

“Don’t—”

“Scor—”

“Just don’t, Vivi. Can’t you go bother Charles or something?”

He pushed his back into his chair, away from her.

She looked down into her cup.

“We broke up.”

His eyes met hers.

She looked away, a profound sorrow in her expression.

“What... when?”

“Oh, last week. I think you were busy.”

She fiddled with her grey and blue tie.

“Do you know where Orion is?”

He asked, folding his hands on the table.

“That boy. I wouldn’t know even if I tried.”

There was a small smile on her face.

“Do you remember that time we lost him in Grandmama's house? We couldn’t find him for hours.”

Scorpius let the memory linger, a smile tugging on the corner of his mouth.

“I told you we should’ve checked the library first,” he said, grinning.

“And then Mum made us sort the library by hand.”

She smirked at him.

“I’ve never seen her so mad.”

He laughed quietly.

“Mum wasn’t…”

The sentence refused to finish.

Virginia pushed his cup of hot chocolate towards him.

Scorpius' eyes drifted to the house-elves. The plates from dinner were still being washed in the many dozen sinks in the large room.

Winky spotted him and was excitedly on her way with more hot chocolate before Scorpius dismissed her with a look.

“Sam said you skipped class,” Virginia said.

“It doesn’t matter.”

Scorpius picked up his cup and finished off the hot chocolate.

Virginia tapped her hand on the table. The monotonous drumming was enough to make Scorpius sleepy.

He flashed her a tense smile.

“I think I’ll go.”

He got up, wiping his mouth from any chocolate residue.

“Are you going to Astronomy?” Virginia piped up.

His eyes glanced to his watch.

It was nearly ten.

“No,” he answered simply before swapping the warm and cosy kitchen for the cold and tight corridors of the castle.

As he left he stared at her, sat alone at the table. Her eyes downcast.

The expression was eerily familiar.

He was grateful Virginia hadn’t inherited their mother’s brown hair.

Even though he had told Virginia he wouldn’t go to Astronomy, his feet seemed to take him towards it.

However, by the time he had wandered up to the base of the tower he knew class would already be over. It was past curfew and he ought to go back down to the dungeons.

Instead, his body pulled him upwards, higher and higher until he was at the tallest point of the castle.

The Astronomy Tower.

Professor Sinistra’s notes were still left on the blackboard. It seemed that a few of the other fifth years had forgotten their telescopes, now strewn across the floor.

The wind blew in through the viewing platform.

He gravitated towards it.

Over the edge he could see all the way down to the grounds.

This is where Albus Dumbledore had died.

He thought of the wind rushing past his body, no wand or broom to catch his fall.

He looked away.

The Gryffindor Tower emitted a warm glow. He could almost picture himself waking up to the view of the Black Lake, the Forbidden Forest and all of the Scottish Highlands that lay beyond.

A gust of cold wind shivered through him.

His eyes wandered upwards.

The sky.

Despite the wind, the stars were surprisingly clear.

He spotted Orion's Belt immediately.

The three stars painted onto the sky.

In perfect order and harmony.

He had watched the same night sky for years.

“Look there,” his mother whispered, arms held tightly around him. “Do you see that one, snaking its way across the sky?”

Her voice was soft like summer rain.

She pointed towards the sky, guiding Scorpius’ small hand in hers. He followed the line and let his eyes wander, a squiggle of stars drawing a majestic beast on the dark background.

“That one is Draco, like your father.”

Her hand tickled around his waist.

“And that one, with the three spikes, that is the Scorpion.”

Scorpius shook off the memory.

His mother’s embrace.

The image was familiar.

A tail snaking its way onto the night sky, three straight lines connected to it.

The Scorpion.

Astoria.

His mother.

She had always told him the stars carried stories.

Draco for his father.

Orion for his brother.

Virgo for his sister.

Scorpius for himself.

Even her own name belonged among them.

Asteria.

The Greek Titan of the falling stars.

He searched the sky for the Scorpion. Aimlessly looking for the same image now.

It was gone.

He was too late.

The constellation had already set in the starry night.

He let his eyes close for a moment.

“Why did you leave?”

His voice was barely louder than a whisper.

The stars gave him no answer.

Chapter 4: Expect the expected

The words stared blankly back at her.

The chapter on Erumpent horns might as well have been written in Gobbledegook.

Rose had read the same page four times, yet every sentence slipped away the moment she reached the next. Her eyes stung. She took off her reading glasses and rubbed her eyes fiercely.

She looked over her notes, the parchment was littered with scribbles. She dipped her quill into the ink once more and slashed through another paragraph.

None of it was worth keeping.

“Erumpent Horns…” She muttered the words as she wrote them down, “are used in various __”

“You’ve got to be joking.”

She looked up to see Al’s unkempt jet-black hair.

“I didn’t believe Gene when she told me you were here,” he stood over her, reading the words she was trying desperately to write on the page.

“Al, just leave me.”

“Breakfast is gonna end in fifteen, you need to eat, Rose.” He said, already stuffing her items into her satchel. “Also, if you want to stay up for the party you got to get a nap or something, you were practically falling asleep.”

Rose sighed.

“I don’t even know why everyone is making such a big deal about it.”

She made a grab for her satchel, but he was quicker, raising it high above his head.

“You don’t understand, it’s O.W.L.s.”

“Rose.”

“What?”

She looked up at him. He looked her right in the face and laughed out loud.

“What?”

Rose snapped.

Albus shook his head.

“Nothing, just you’ve got…”

He shrugged, a small smirk on his face.

“I’m sitting the exact same O.W.L.s,” he said the words as if she was stupid.

Judging by the last hour, he was probably right.

Her eyes lingered on the nearly written paragraph. The ink hadn't even dried yet.

“Breakfast, then you can get it back.”

He snatched up the parchment and ran away from Rose’s little alcove.

She picked up the quill and ink bottle. She had no choice but to follow him.

Her first class was History of Magic. Professor Binns wouldn’t notice if she finished her Potions essay then.

Rose’s luck had not turned, and on their way towards the Great Hall she obviously had to run into Malfoy.

“Al, where are you off to?”

She didn’t even care to look at him, she would have to see enough of him during DADA later, unless he skipped the class again.

“This one hasn’t had breakfast yet,” Albus pointed to Rose as if she was an incompetent child.

She looked up and saw Malfoy’s usual smarmy look.

He snickered a laugh before passing them.

“Nice make-up you got going there, Weasley. You should keep that for tonight,” he commented.

She lightly touched her face, but he was already heading off towards the greenhouses.

“I hope the Devil’s Snare strangles you,” she yelled after him, his disgusting laugh echoing in the corridor.

“What is his problem?”

She turned angrily to Albus.

Her cousin was hunched over in laughter.

“I may have forgotten to mention…” Al wheezed, wiping tears from his eyes. “You've got ink all over your face.”

She touched her cheek.

Black ink coated her fingertips.

Rose stared at them for a heartbeat.

She slowly turned back toward Albus, her hand ready at her wand.

“You better run, Albus Severus Potter.”

He barely had time to straighten before the Bat-Bogey Hex caught him square in the chest.

Saira stared wide-eyed at Rose as she finished not one, not two, but three essays during History of Magic.

“Rose, as you love essays so much, you wouldn’t mind finishing my DADA essay.”

Rose eyed her.

“Saira, do you mean the one due today?”

She laughed.

Saira only offered a sheepish smile.

“She’s been too busy fighting with the Slytherins,” Gene fiddled with her necklace.

The three girls were walking towards Charms.

“They started it,” Saira replied with a shrug. “They're the ones who put sticky paste on Lucas' Keeper gloves.”

A wicked grin formed on her face.

They separated for a moment, letting some sixth years walk past.

“And well… I might have gotten Roxy to put flea eggs in their helmets.”

The Quidditch captain continued.

Rose glared at Saira as two first years forced their way past them.

“Hey, why don't you ever ask me? I'm on the team too.”

She folded her arms.

“I can do more than write essays.”

Rose sulked as she watched Saira pull out a package of Bertie Botts from her satchel.

“Want one?” she asked, offering the packet to Rose, who politely declined.

A few beans fell out as she turned the packet on Gene, who cringed in disgust.

“No way! If I puke I won’t be able to go to the party tonight.”

Rose stopped in her tracks.

“You’re seriously gonna go to that, Gene?”

Genevieve flashed Rose a sweet smile.

“Rose, it’s a party, not a funeral. The whole Hogwarts population is gonna be there, Al… Lucie… even Tommy.”

Gene stopped square in the middle of the corridor.

She pulled Rose and Saira closer.

Saira was more interested in her packet of Bertie Botts than the conversation, and Rose was regretting even saying anything in the first place.

“I heard they paid off your cousin so she won’t tell the headmistress.”

Saira snorted before popping a Bertie Botts in her mouth.

“Molly?” Rose laughed. “I doubt it.”

Rose pulled Gene along with her.

“To get her to agree to that they’d have to pull out that stick up her—”

Saira’s face grimaced in disgust.

“…Was it earwax?” Rose asked.

“Nope, burnt grass.”

Gene and Rose laughed at Saira's discomfort.

Once inside the Charms classroom, the girls split up.

Rose took her usual spot next to Dominique.

“Have you been part of the planning committee?”

Rose sat down and noted the confetti stuck to Dominique’s hair.

Dom rolled her eyes.

“Ugh, no. It’s Lisa and Bella. They have taken over our whole dorm, wrapping presents and gluing decorations.”

Rose scrunched her nose.

“I can’t believe they are going through all that effort. I heard Bella say to Samantha Zabini that Malfoy was ‘*feeling down*’,” she signalled air quotes. “I bet you he ran out of hair gel or something.”

Rose got out her parchment.

“The start-of-term party… what does that have to do with Malfoy, Rose?”

Dominique shrugged.

Alice came rushing into the classroom before Rose could respond, slouching down into the seat behind them.

“That cousin of yours is infuriating.”

She glared at Dom and Rose.

“Don’t get me started on Al today,” Rose sighed.

Gene twisted around in her seat.

“He let me walk around with ink all over my face,” Rose said, pulling out her parchment. “I got him though, with a Bat-Bogey.”

“I don’t mean Al.”

“What did Fred do now?” Dominique exclaimed.

“Not Fred. James. He decided to try out some stupid new product on me, look.”

Alice lifted a thick lock of hair from behind her ear.

The ends had been burnt clean off.

Gene gasped from the bench below.

“Why would he ever.”

Rose was already uncorking her ink bottle while Alice spoke.

“I wish I had walked around with ink on my face. I’ll look terrible at the party tonight.”

Rose could already see tears gathering in Alice's eyes.

“I’m not wonderful at beauty charms, but I could…” Rose began.

Gene frowned.

For a long moment she didn't say anything, her fingers worrying at the pendant around her neck.

“…I could always try and research them later—”

“I’ll help you,” Gene interrupted. “Meet me after classes today,” she said before turning back towards the blackboard just as Professor Flitwick walked through the door.

Turquoise sparks flew past her ear.

Rose barely flinched.

“You call that a shot?” she smirked.

Another spell came her way.

“Protego.”

She straightened, putting her hand on her hip and twirling the wand between her fingers.

“Honestly, Malfoy,” she readied herself, “Impedimenta,” she yelled out, but he was able to stop her advances.

“Are you ever just quiet?” he said through gritted teeth, before giving the spell another attempt.

“Nope, Impedimenta.”

He flashed her a grin.

“I wasn’t expecting you to be this terrible, Weasley.”

His next attempt at the jinx flew past her, bouncing off of the classroom wall.

Uncle Harry was walking around the classroom, inspecting all the pairs as they attempted to perfect the Impediment Jinx.

“Well, you couldn’t hit a slug if it was right in front of you,” she joked.

He sent another flash of turquoise her way.

She rolled onto the stone floor, narrowly escaping his jinx.

Harry stepped in front of Rose’s path.

“Rose, Scorpius. How is the lesson going?” He glanced between the two of them.

Rose exhaled sharply, her hand itching to send a curse in Malfoy’s path.

“Fine, Professor Potter,” Malfoy spoke up.

“Scorpius, I’ve said to use Harry,” he laughed. “Rose, your wand movement is just slightly off, try flicking your wrist a tad more. Excellent form, Scorpius.”

Uncle Harry grinned at the two before moving on to the next pair.

“As you were.”

Harry was just out of the line of fire when Rose began her attack.

“I’ll show you correct wand movement,” she muttered, sending another attempt at the jinx Malfoy’s way.

He wasn’t prepared.

The jinx hit him right in the chest and his movements slowed down. His body falling backwards in slow motion.

“Too late, Scorpy,” she mocked. “Just like you were late to patrols yesterday,” she edged towards him.

“Or just like you were late adding the Honeywater in the potion yesterday.”

He had just managed to stumble to his feet before Rose began her second attack.

A blast of turquoise shot out of Malfoy’s wand, but Rose intercepted it.

“Flipendo.”

The jinx was stronger and Malfoy wasn’t expecting it.

“You’re just plain slow.”

He fell back, knocked to the ground.

He pointed his wand at her.

“Expelliarmus.”

Scorpius’ wand flew from his hand, landing on the other side of the classroom.

The noise drew the others’ attention.

A tight smile on Malfoy’s lips.

For one glorious second Rose thought she'd won.

She stood over him.

“I’m sorry, Scorpy, are you feeling down? Perhaps a party can cheer you up.”

His smile slipped.

Not much.

Not enough that anyone else would notice.

But Rose did.

For once, Scorpius Malfoy looked like he didn't have a comeback.

Then she saw something flicker across his face. Something she couldn't quite place.

Something inside her snapped.

“Stupefy—”

Harry's shield intercepted the spell.

“Expelliarmus.”

Her wand dropped to the floor.

Around them, the room had fallen silent.

Every wand was lowered.

Every pair had stopped fighting.

“Rose Granger Weasley.”

His voice was quiet, which was somehow worse.

“Detention at eight.”

“What, Uncle Harry—”

“Professor Potter.”

“Malfoy wasn’t even in class on Monday, why aren’t you giving him a—”

“Do you want two detentions?”

There was not a single pair still duelling, everyone’s attention was on Rose.

“No, Professor Potter.”

She hung her head.

Malfoy had managed to get up from the floor.

He walked so quietly over to where his wand had dropped, that had Rose not been watching him she never would've noticed.

His fingers tightened around his wand.

For a moment, he looked more tired than angry.

His eyes met hers, there was no smugness on his face.

Only a genuine distraught look.

For a moment, something uncomfortable twisted in her stomach.

She pushed it away.

He was only trying to make her feel guilty. Anything to garner sympathy.

She huffed and watched as he stormed out of the classroom.

Typical.

Couldn't even fight his own battles.

Rose didn't feel like eating dinner after the day she had had. Instead, she waited outside of the DADA classroom while the rest of her peers went down to dinner. She only hoped it wasn't turkey, then she might change her mind.

The quiet corridors were the best place to study, no distractions. Not the usual student going into her library alcove, stealing a book off the shelf. Only an occasional ghost passing by, ignoring Rose. They didn't have a care in the world.

Helena Ravenclaw did, however, wander straight through Rose, which gave her quite the chill.

At one point, in the middle of dinner, she did think she heard footsteps, but it was most likely a first-year who had gotten lost on the way.

Her Uncle Harry arrived five minutes past eight.

"Rose, have you been here all evening?"

She held up her notes and essays.

"No time like the present," she laughed nervously.

He only gave her a small smile.

"You really are your mother's daughter," he laughed. "Come on."

Once inside, he wordlessly lit the lamps in the room. Rose put her satchel down.

“Right, what do you want me to do? I can write lines.”

Harry cringed at the suggestion.

“Or polish all the cabinets. Perhaps count over all the inventory—”

Harry drew out a chair.

“Sit.”

He held the chair out for her.

“Sit?”

She looked at him with wide eyes, but got down in the chair.

Her uncle pulled up another one on the opposite side of the table.

“Rose, what happened today in class… stuff like that can't happen again.”

His voice was firm.

“I know, Uncle Harry, I’m so sorry, I got a bit carried away. But I promise I will—”

Harry sighed, pulling off his round spectacles and rubbing them on his shirt until they were as clean as they could possibly be.

“Do you know what my biggest mistake was?”

Rose furrowed her brow. She expected him to laugh it off.

He didn't.

“You mean like getting a T on your O.W.L.s?”

He chuckled and got up from his chair. He was pacing the room, unable to begin his next sentence.

“When I was your age, Rose,” he looked at her. “I was very angry at the world.”

Rose nearly laughed.

Of course he was angry. He had every right to be angry. Voldemort had been targeting him since he was a baby.

Rose leaned forward, her elbows on the desk.

“I hurt people, people I cared about… and people I didn’t.”

Harry was looking out of the window now. He turned back to Rose and got down in his seat again. He stared at her, not moving an inch.

“I nearly killed another student.”

Rose let out a small gasp before looking away from him.

“Why—why are you telling me?”

She folded her arms.

This had nothing to do with the way Malfoy was acting.

“Malfoy is acting a complete git, he deserved…”

She let the words falter.

He did deserve what was coming for him, but her uncle’s stern look was enough to shut Rose up.

“Perhaps he did, but lashing out isn’t the answer.”

“—Says you,” her voice was growing louder with each word. “You nearly killed someone.”

Harry was quiet for a moment.

“Yes,” he said finally. “I did.”

He sighed heavily and sat back down, opposite Rose.

“It was my sixth year. I had just started N.E.W.T.-level Potions.”

Rose let her arms unfold and drew her attention back to her uncle.

“I had found the potions book in the supply closet. An old tattered one with notes scribbled all over. It was a really helpful book, I was the best potion-maker in the whole year,” he grinned at the memory. “But the book also had a darkness. Spells created by the author.”

He looked at Rose as he spoke, needing her to hear every word.

“Your mother warned me about using it, but I was stupid, a sixteen-year-old,” a small chuckle escaped him. “This classmate of mine was doing things I couldn't explain. Things that frightened me. I convinced myself he was already becoming his father. Times were desperate, Voldemort had just returned.”

Rose knew the story.

Everyone did.

Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived. Her parents beside him. The Golden Trio. The heroes who had saved the wizarding world.

Yet surrounded by shelves of cursed objects and dark artefacts, the line between hero and villain suddenly seemed far less certain.

“Rose, listen.”

“Sorry…”

Her eyes snapped back.

“One day I followed this student, I used a spell I had never tried before. I watched as he nearly bled to death on the bathroom floor. There was so much blood,” her uncle pulled off his glasses once more, though there was no way they could get any clearer.

“He could’ve died, and I would’ve been to blame, not because I tried using a spell I didn’t know. But because I didn’t know when to stop.”

Rose stared at him.

She understood what he was saying, even if she wasn’t sure she agreed.

“What—what happened to the student?” she asked, her interest piqued.

“You know of him,” Rose furrowed her brow.

Harry got up, pacing aimlessly.

“That student was…”

Harry stopped.

His hands gripped the back of his chair.

“Draco Malfoy.”

Her eyes widened.

Harry looked away, his fingers tightening around the chair.

“I spent years thinking that because I was fighting the right war, every choice I made was justified.”

Harry Potter had almost killed someone.

Not just anyone.

Malfoy’s father.

“But he was—”

“And before you say it,” Harry interrupted, “Yes, Draco was doing terrible things. He was making choices that frightened me. I was not wrong to be afraid of him.”

He looked at her.

“I was wrong to let that fear decide who I became.”

“Why are you telling me…”

The words faltered.

“I know you and Scorpius have your differences, Rose. You have got to stop letting that control you. Next time you feel like hexing him. Try thinking of something you two have in common—”

“We have nothing in common—” she spat out.

Her uncle’s eyes drifted to the maroon pin on her chest.

“Are you sure about that?”

Rose looked down at the pin, lightly touching it.

“So what, we are both Prefects. That doesn’t change anything.”

He shot a look at the badge once more.

“It tells me someone trusted both of you to make the right choice, even when it’s difficult.”

Harry sighed and went to open the classroom door.

“Now go on, join the party, Rose.”

“What party?” She lied.

“I know about the party in the Slytherin common room, you teenagers sure aren’t conspicuous.”

“Right… I’m not going.”

Her uncle flashed her a confused look.

“It’s a stupid party for Malfoy—”

Harry shot her a look.

“Fine, I go for like five minutes,” she got up and hurried out of the room before her uncle could give her any more stern looks of disappointment.

As she walked into the party she could smell the distinct smell of fire-whiskey.

Fred and James, she rolled her eyes.

Her eyes wandered over the crowd. Students from the older years dancing, snogging and Merlin knows, she didn’t need to see it on full display in the Common room at the very least.

Rose was sure she could spot Saira together with sixth year Tori Thomas. Though it was dark, so she couldn’t be sure.

Not only was the room dark due to the chandeliers having been blown out, but the whole vibe. She didn’t like it.

The first thing she noticed was the enormous window overlooking the Black Lake. Beyond the glass, the water stretched into endless darkness. Looking at it made her feel as though she might drown simply by standing too close.

“Rosie,” Gene put her hand around her shoulder. Her speech was slurred.

“Gene, should we get you some water?”

Rose untangled herself from Genevieve.

“No, no, no, I don’t need,” she pointed towards Alice, who was stood at the top of a small indoor balcony talking to James. Her hair was cut in a really cute bob. “Look at her stupid hair, Rosie. I did that. I made it look like that. I fixed it.”

Gene was nearly slumped over.

“I think you might need some water,” Rose laughed.

“Maybe you are right, you do have four eyes,” the girl hiccuped as Rose pulled her with her to the common room bathroom.

As she passed the boys' stall she could spot a familiar face.

Malfoy had his hands clenched around the sink basin, his knuckles white. His breathing came in ragged pulls.

In.

Out.

Too fast.

Her first instinct was to keep walking.

Instead, she stopped.

In.

Out.

The sound was jarring.

Gene swayed beside her, mumbling something Rose couldn't make out. Rose barely heard. Her hand found the doorframe without thinking.

His shoulders were so tense it looked as though, if he relaxed, his whole body would fall apart.

Before she realised it, she'd taken a step towards him.

A floorboard creaked.

His eyes shot up in the mirror.

Their gazes locked.

Neither of them moved.

His breathing hitched.

In.

Out.

Faster.

He stared at her, while she stared right back.

She was about to open her mouth to say… something. Anything.

When his head whipped back down and he puked.

Right.

Down.

The sink drain.

Relief washed over her.

Her shoulders loosened.

Firewhisky.

Of course.

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