*The Great Hall, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*

*September 1, 1993*

For a young wizard in his third year, Harry James Potter found that this year’s feast was more or less average. He was more or less cheerful, despite the fact that he passed out on the train due to the Dementors, and further despite that a supposedly mad murderer was after him. Or make that two mad murderers, though one was apparently no more than a spirit, the other was certainly flesh and blood, and going by the name Sirius Black.

A round of laughter could be heard from three tables over; Malfoy was apparently reenacting Harry’s fainting scene to his cronies, and the majority of the Slytherins were enjoying his attempt at wit and charm. For two years Harry had had the evils of Slytherin house preached to him from various people, and for the most part he believed them, especially with the likes of Draco Malfoy acting as the face of the house. As his gaze lingered on the table of the snakes, he noticed a few seemed to not take part in the same frivolities as their housemates; perhaps not the *whole* house was evil…

At the head table, Dumbledore had stood up, likely to end the feast and send the houses off to their common rooms. Before he could get even one word in, a soft sound pierced the air, slowly building in the ears of all those in the great hall. Harry could feel the magic gathering, reminding him in some ways of static electricity in which he could just feel that something was about to happen. Then the magic coalesced in the space between the head table and the four house tables; with a soft pop the sound stopped, and standing in the center there was the most curious sight…

A crib. Dumbledore came around to inspect it, though as he approached it his eyes widened at the site before him. Once more he started to speak, but was cut off, as a somewhat familiar voice seemed to emanate from the new piece of furniture adorning The Great Hall.

*“If you are listening to the message, then the worst has happened and we have finally been hunted down. It pains me to believe that we could possibly lose, but having fought him multiple times in the past and mortally wounding him each time, I felt it was best to take precautions should he finally catch up to us.*

*“To start, the little one in the crib is our daughter, Cynthia Renée; she was born June 5, 1999 and has been nothing if not my pride and joy since. While not the smartest decision to have a child in the midst of war, I suppose if there’s one thing I learned from my parents it’s that you don’t always have to do everything in a completely logical manner.*

*“To whit, allow me to explain why I would choose to send my daughter to the past: I want her to be able to grow up in a world without the war, and if possible, have her be around her parents for longer than she got in our time. I was forced to grow up without my parents, and felt it would not be fair to do the same to her.*

*“Of course, the only way this can happen is if we prevent the war from starting in the first place. If my calculations are correct, this crib should have appeared sometime in the year 1993; if so, then there should be plenty of time to make the necessary changes to stop the second coming of Tom Riddle and prevent the most bloody wizarding war from ever occurring.* (Albus Dumbledore’s eyes widened comically at this statement).

*“I guess to start, I should get a message out: hey Moony* (Remus looked startled at having been called out by this strange, yet familiar, voice)*, Padfoot is innocent and you can likely find that rat Wormtail trying to escape Ron Weasley’s robes at this moment.* (indeed, a commotion came from Ron’s rat, Scabbers, and as it tried to scamper away from The Great Hall both Remus and Albus managed to hit him with a stunner each).

*“Hopefully you’ve got him in custody now. Unfortunately, doing this will only delay the inevitable, as there is still the problem of Barty Crouch Jr., but I’ll get to that later. Now for a history lesson: in my fourth year the Tri-Wizard Tournament was revived and brought to Hogwarts; in that same year Alastor Moody was asked to be the DADA teacher. One champion each was chosen from Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang, but before the celebrations could truly begin, a fourth name came out, and thus I was entered into a tournament that was only supposed to be available to those that were of age.*

*“The tasks themselves, while difficult, were not so challenging that I couldn’t manage them, and by the third task, I was in the lead for points and allowed to enter the maze first. The tricks and traps were just deadly enough on their own, but someone had put the Durmstrang champion under the Imperious and had forced him to torture the Beauxbatons champion; we stunned him and activated the signal to show that they were done with the challenge. We, the two Hogwarts champions, reached the Tri-Wizard cup at the same time, and we agreed to both take the cup at the same time; a Hogwarts victory.*

*“Unfortunately, the cup was a portkey which brought us to a graveyard in Little Hangleton. Before either of us knew what was happening, a voice called out to ‘kill the spare;’ the other Hogwarts champion was taken out with a single killing curse. I was then stunned and tied to a large ornate gravestone; after being revived, I was subjected to a ritual where my blood was taken and combined into a potion with the bone of his father and flesh of his servant. As soon as the blood was added, Lord Voldemort was given a new form in a homunculus body. I was released and given back my wand and forced to duel the newly reformed Dark Lord. Amazingly, I survived, but not before the echoes of the last few of Voldemort’s victims came out of his wand, including my parents. I hung on as long as I could, and in the end I managed to get the body of the other champion and get to the cup, which brought us back to Hogwarts.*

*“It was at this time that Moody took me back to the castle and more or less outed himself as an imposter taking Polyjuice Potion. The man was actually Barty Crouch Jr., having been let out of Azkaban by his father at his mother’s request. She was already dying, so they had her take Polyjuice to become her son, and then exchanged the two, allowing her to die in prison, while Barty Crouch Sr. kept his son at home, under an invisibility cloak and the Imperious Curse. The curse wore off, though, and allowed Jr. to escape and attack Moody, taking his place so that he could enter my name in the tournament and change the destination of the portkey on the Tri-Wizard Cup.*

*“The announcements that the Dark Lord was back were made, but it mostly fell on deaf ears. Cornelius Fudge and the rest of the Ministry decided to do their very best ostrich impression and started spreading lies, saying that Dumbledore made up that Voldemort was back so that he could raise an army and take over the Ministry for himself. That summer, two Dementors were ordered to my home, very nearly sucking the soul out of my cousin; only the fact that I could cast a Patronus since my third year managed to save us. Unfortunately, the Ministry detected this and ordered me to surrender my wand as I was to be expelled for performing magic. Fortunately, Dumbledore heard and managed to stop it from happening, but I still had to go to a trial before the full tribunal of the Wizengamot. Again, Dumbledore came through for me and along with Amelia Bones got the charges dropped, but something was still off about the whole scenario.*

*“That year turned out to be one of the worst I’d ever had; no one had applied for the DADA position, so the Ministry sent their very own toad to fill the position, and thus we got Dolores Jane Umbridge for a teacher. As the Ministry was convinced about Dumbledore raising an army at the school, she was sent to spy on us and ensure that we were not being taught to fight at all, thus her class was nothing but theory. I spoke out against her, earning several detentions with her and wound up having to write lines with a Blood Quill. To this day, I have a scar on the back of my right hand that says ‘I will not tell lies.’*

*“My best friends were convinced that something had to be done, especially since it was our O.W.L. year and we had almost no chance of passing the DADA OWL with Umbridge’s teaching method. That year we formed something of an independent study group that met on the seventh floor across from the tapestry of Barnabus the Barmy attempting to teach trolls to dance; otherwise known as the Room of Requirement.*

*“We had to meet in secret, though, as Umbridge had been given many powers above and beyond what she rightly should have had due to Fudge’s interference, thus any and all student clubs were disbanded and had to have her permission to reform. Of course, this group would never be allowed, so we came up with a method to alert everyone when a meeting was to begin; our name? Dumbledore’s Army.* (This elicited a chuckle from the man himself).

*“Throughout that year, I had been getting visions about a long, dark hallway and had been prodded into trying to go get it. Of course, I had no idea where it was that I was supposed to go, nor any idea what I was to be after in the first place. A little research showed that it was the Department of Mysteries that I was supposedly seeing, and that whatever was sending me these visions was after a Prophecy that apparently only I could retrieve. Towards the end of that year, during my History of Magic OWL, I had one last painful vision where it looked as though my godfather was being held hostage. I told my closest friends and gave a warning to Professor Snape so that he could inform the rest of the Order of the Phoenix, but was convinced that I had to go as well. I told them to stay behind, but they wouldn’t hear any of it, so I along with five of my closest friends flew to London on the backs of Thestrals in order to try and perform a rescue.*

*“It was a trap. When we got there, it appeared that no one was there, but once the Prophecy orb was located, twelve inner circle Death Eaters emerged from the shadows and demanded that I give it to them. We ended up fighting to get out of there alive, and somehow all had survived by the time the Order had showed up. A fight broke out between my godfather and Bellatrix LeStrange, and in the next horrifying moment, my godfather, Sirius Black, was pushed through the Veil of Death.*

*“The Prophecy orb was smashed, Voldemort had shown himself in the Ministry and managed to escape with Bellatrix, though the other eleven Death Eaters had been captured. All six of us students that had come to the Ministry were injured in some way, but it appeared that we were going to be alright.*

*“I was never the same, though; my godfather was gone and never coming back. All hope and promises of living with him and getting away from those that had tortured me all of my life was gone. To say I was devastated would be an understatement. That summer I had simply gone through the motions, though even that was something I had barely done. That morning, when Dumbledore had forced me back to his office from the Ministry, he told me what the Prophecy actually said…*

*"****The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies… and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not… and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives… the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies…***

*“At that point, I no longer held the hope of survival, believing that I would never get the chance to actually grow up, to finish school, find someone to settle down with, and start the family that I had wanted so badly for all of my life. That summer was likely the most miserable one of my life; compounding the problem was that I never received a single word from any of my friends. Never before had I felt so alone.*

*“Dumbledore came to take me away from my relatives later in the summer, and brought me to Diagon to buy my school supplies for the next year, but not before making a quick stop to recruit a new Potions instructor; Severus Snape had been transferred to the DADA position. I spent the rest of my holiday at headquarters, wondering why I hadn’t received any post from my friends.*

*“The train ride that year was also quite lonely; I found a compartment to myself, awaiting my friends, though none had appeared. The train had started moving and still no one came. It really killed me to be so alone, but I should have known it wouldn’t last; the blond ferret of house Slytherin decided to drop in and rub salt in the wound, but I didn’t give him time to utter a single sentence. I flattened him outside the compartment and shut the door on his face, putting up as many locking charms as I could before sinking back down and choosing to wallow in self pity.*

*“This didn’t last long, either; someone broke through my locking charms, entering and sitting down before reforming the charms on the door. I ignored her and she just sat there staring at me. I finally cracked and asked her what she was doing there; that’s when she started describing things that I didn’t think anybody else should be able to know, such as Sirius being innocent and Peter Pettigrew being the real traitor, about the existence of the Prophecy and what it was being interpreted as meaning, about the fact that my friends were now ignoring me because of everything that had happened between the Ministry and the Prophecy.*

*“Needless to say, I was stunned. Over the next few hours we talked and got to know each other; imagine my surprise in finding that she was a Slytherin in my year! We hadn’t ever really spoken to each other before then, but it seems that she was part of a small group of people who didn’t hang on every word that Malfoy said. Since Malfoy’s father was imprisoned after the Ministry incident, Draco had lost much of his influence in the house, thus it was safe for her and anyone else like her to branch out and befriend whoever she wanted. When I asked her why come to me, though, she simply said that after seeing Malfoy on the ground like that, she looked in and saw I was alone and looking miserable, and decided that nobody should have to be alone.*

*“That year became almost the best year of my life while at school. I was introduced to her small group of friends in her house, as well as the few others from the other two houses that she had brought in over the years. This turned out to be excellent timing, since those same closest friends that I had from the previous five years had apparently chosen to abandon me. I would have been more upset, but after talking with my new friends, I learned that it would have simply been a waste of my time and resources to worry about it.*

*“I spent that year learning about the history of Tom Riddle from Dumbledore; a more useless waste of time I have never spent. My new friends saw that I wasn’t being taught what I should have, and started training with me in order to try and bring up my power and increase my skill set in order to survive. The only thing Dumbledore actually taught me that was useful, was about the Horcruxes that Voldemort created to stay alive. Using a memory that we retrieved from the new Potions instructor, we learned that Riddle was interested in the number seven, and had apparently decided to split his soul into seven separate pieces; one inside him and six protected in certain objects. I’ll get to these in a moment.*

*“While this was going on, something wonderful had happened to me; my new friend from the train had agreed to become my girlfriend. It was this event that marked a change in me, and I actually believed I could make it through whatever it was that I had needed to do. By the end of the year, everything seemed to be finally looking up, as I had a steady and very serious girlfriend, and Dumbledore had agreed to bring me with him to retrieve a horcrux! Unfortunately, as is usual in my life, something had to bring it all crashing down around me. When we came back to Hogwarts, an attack was in progress; Draco Malfoy had been marked by Voldemort the previous summer and had succeeded in repairing a Vanishing Cabinet in the Room of Requirement’s Room of Lost Things. Death Eaters came through it from the other paired Cabinet in Borgin and Burke’s, thus providing a distraction while Draco ran up to the Astronomy Tower with the intent to assassinate Dumbledore.*

*“I had my father’s cloak on and had been petrified by Dumbledore as soon as we got onto the tower, thus I could see and hear everything that happened, but could do nothing to stop it; Malfoy choked, only able to disarm Dumbledore. Snape showed up and finished what Draco started, casting the Killing Curse and flinging Dumbledore over the edge of the tower. After they left, Albus’s spell wore off, and I gave chase. I was no match for them, though, and they were able to escape the castle unhindered. Dumbledore was dead, and to add insult to injury, the horcrux we found was a fake! A note from a former Death Eater with the initials R.A.B. was found inside, claiming that he had found the real one and had destroyed it, leaving this one in its place.*

*“At Dumbledore’s funeral, I attempted to break up with my girlfriend, only to be slapped and told that nothing of the sort was happening. At that point, we agreed that there was no way we were coming back to the school; we went to ground for two months, researching what we could until my seventeenth birthday, thus breaking the tracking on my wand and allowing me to do whatever magic I would need. I withdrew as much money as I could and we prepared for what we would need to do.*

*“The hunt was on for Voldemort’s horcruxes; two had been destroyed already: a diary in my second year, and a ring that was apparently found in the former shack of the Gaunt family the previous summer. We did what research we could, and eventually determined the identity and location of each of the remaining ones: the locket had been taken by Sirius’s brother Regulus and given to their house elf Kreature to destroy, but had later been stolen by Mundungus Fletcher and confiscated by Dolores Umbridge. If this worked and was brought back to 1993, it should still be located at number 12 Grimauld Place. The other three horcruxes were more dangerous to try to collect; Hufflepuff’s Cup was being kept in Bellatrix LeStrange’s vault at Gringotts, Ravenclaw’s Diadem was in the Room of Requirement’s Room of Lost Things, and finally there was a horcrux in Riddle’s familiar, the snake Nagini.*

*“Even after the year we spent finding and destroying these things, we still couldn’t kill Voldemort. In four separate battles, I must’ve mortally wounded him at least six times, yet still he didn’t die. I have no idea if he was able to make any more horcruxes after we started destroying them, as all of our research says that once you hit six of them, you no longer have enough soul to split off. Once we realized that we couldn’t win against him, we fled.*

*“We ended up in France, where we decided to wed and create a bolt hole in a small cottage owned by the Black family on the southern coast of France. A few months after, my wife learned she was pregnant, which both brought me incredible joy and terrified me, as it meant that we could be putting ourselves into much more danger, what with having to care for a baby while still being hunted. In the end, my fears for my wife during her pregnancy were unfounded, and we welcomed the most beautiful baby girl on June 5, 1999.*

*“Reports had been coming in, though, that Voldemort and his Death Eaters were on the move since they had conquered Briton. Knowing we had little time, my wife and I placed this spell on our daughter’s crib to bring her six years back in time, should my calculations be correct. Unfortunately, this spell required much more magic than we could cast normally, so all we could do is set up the groundwork and tie the spell to us. If this has worked and she has been propelled six years into the past, then our theory worked, and the spell fueled itself on our sacrifice. The Death Eaters will have likely found us and attacked, and while we will fight back with all we have, I doubt the two of us can take an army. I only hope Voldemort tries to break into the nursery after this spell goes off, as there was a little surprise waiting for him that has hopefully ended the war in our timeline.*

*“I’m running out of memory on this charm, so I guess that’s it. To any who are listening, I hope that you are able to stop the war before it starts, as too many good people had to die to get to where we were in our time. Please give all of our love to our baby girl, and make sure she’s well cared for, preferably by her parents in the new timeline. Love, Harry and Daphne Potter.”*

Once the message stopped, silence reigned in the Great Hall. Harry blinked a few times before looking over to the Slytherin table and locking eyes with the only girl who could possibly fit the description of who he married in the other timeline. Daphne Greengrass stared back at him, as if confused that something like this could have happened. Before a commotion could start, Dumbledore raised his wand and said, “I’m afraid I can’t let anybody remember this… *Obliviate!*”

Everyone blinked at that proclamation, and then realized that nothing had happened; for a moment they all wondered if Dumbledore had lost his power somehow, when another voice rang out from the crib. This voice was also familiar; feminine, and most likely the girl’s mother if anyone was to guess.

*“Nice try, Dumbledore. If I and my husband were still around, you’d have won me ten Galleons for that. I placed an additional charm on the message that we left so that it would be impossible for anyone who hears it to tell it to anyone that hasn’t heard it already, and further than that it couldn’t be forcibly removed from their brain. I always knew you were the kind to believe that information should not be free and that much of it should only be known by you; oh sure, you site security reasons, but really, you need to step back and start letting someone else handle the responsibilities for once. You are not infallible, so you shouldn’t put all of your trust in yourself only.*

*“I know before you died, you hid much of the things that Harry needed to know from him, so I suggest you start telling him before he has a chance to get angry; you wouldn’t like him when he’s angry. I suspected there was something terribly wrong with his scar and that weird connection it gives him with Voldemort, but I had no way to verify that or discover what precisely was causing the connection. If you know anything, I suggest you tell him now and help him to figure out how to get rid of it; it only caused us problems for as long as it existed.”*

The voice remained silent after this, and once again the whole of The Great Hall was stunned; most of the teachers were quite angry with Albus for his attempt to remove the message from everyone’s minds, but couldn’t really say anything with so many students there. Clearing his throat, Dumbledore announced, “I think that’s enough excitement for tonight…”

Before he could finish that thought, though, Harry had come to his senses and realized that, should the mysterious voice that sounded like an older version of himself be telling the truth, his daughter was lying there in that crib. He felt a sudden pang in his heart and made the decision to walk up there and see for himself.

When he reached the crib, his eyes widened at what he was seeing; two green eyes and a shock of jet black hair adorning a child of no more than three months. Still amazed at what he was seeing, he didn’t even perceive that he had reached down and picked her up, cradling her against his chest.

No one had ever seen that expression on his face before. In general, he showed little emotion to those around him, though depending on the circumstance, he could be seen to be angry, sad, or annoyed; sometimes a small smile could be seen on his face, but rarely has he been truly happy. On those occasions that he gets to fly, a look of pure excitement and adrenaline adorns his face; but not until this night had anybody seen him with a look of pure contentment, as if being able to hold this child was the most relaxing thing he could possibly do.

Dumbledore shook himself of his astonishment and said, “Right; Prefects, please lead you housemates to your Common Rooms, I believe this concludes tonight’s feast…” The commotion was deafening, but the crowd managed to thin out as students were lead away; Ron and Hermione tried to fight their way over to him, but got pulled away by the crowd and was unable to approach him. The other teachers gathered around as well, but none said a word as they simply watched in fascination as Harry seemed to gently rock the little girl to sleep.

Harry looked up to Professor McGonagall and quietly said, “I doubt my dormmates would appreciate me bringing her up to our dorm to be awoken throughout the night; are there any other quarters I can use, at least for now?”

Minerva McGonagall was snapped out of her reverie by the sudden question. She said, “Yes, I think that would be a problem; if you’ll follow me, I’ll show you to where you will be staying for now…” She turned to face the Headmaster and said with the barest of annoyance, “As long as that is alright with you, Albus?”

Dumbledore’s mustache twitched in response as he said, “Oh yes, I don’t see a problem with that; in fact…”

Harry saw that they were being approached by one more; a hesitant Daphne Greengrass seemed conflicted about whether she should even be there or if she should make a run for it.