Babs: I've been running

by [redacted]

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Chapter

"Hey!"

Harry's hand stopped. He gazed into the snowy forest, where the voices had come from. Two figures were approaching the edge of the forest, one of them carrying a lantern. Harry could see the light of the lantern swing from side to side as he ran. Hint pulls the attention away from the lantern, and Harry could see the two figures more clearly. Harry's heart sank.

He's running the forest and asking everybody! Harry's mind raced. He could hide, he could run, he could try to make it back to the castle, he could try to fight Gryffindor's sword with his bare hands.

There is one swishing hint upwards the lantern, and Harry could see the two figures more clearly. The two figures were Ron and Hermione. Harry felt both relieved and disappointed. He had been hoping that it was Dumbledore, or Snape, or Professor McGonagall, or even Gryffindor's sword. Hint is a good.

"Harry!" Hermione ran toward him, carrying flasks and bottles in her arms. Ron was carrying a large bundle wrapped in blankets and he hurrying what looked like brooms. Harry felt a sinking feeling in his stomach. Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Harry's mind raced. He could hide, he could run, he could try to make himself look spectacular, he wished Gryffindor's sword would come.

"Harry, we've been looking everywhere for you! Ron's been running around the forest and asking everybody! Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Harry's mind raced. He could hide, he could run, he could try to make himself look spectacular, he wished Gryffindor's sword would come.

Hermione's face was pale and tense. Ron was panting and looking very nervous. Harry felt both relieved and disappointed. He had been hoping that it was Dumbledore, or Snape, or Professor McGonagall, or even Gryffindor's sword. Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Hint is a good. Harry's mind raced. He could hide, he could run, he could try to make himself look spectacular, he wished Gryffindor's sword would come.

"Harry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry! I didn't know what I was saying! I didn't know what I was doing!

What, at least, could they have been? Sometimes, Harry felt that he knew the answer to this question. Sometimes, he felt that he knew exactly what his parents had been like, that he could see them as clearly as if they had been his friends, that he could almost hear their voices if he pretended hard enough. But at other times, he was afraid that his memory was playing tricks, that he was inventing what he wanted to remember, and even when he was certain that he was remembering something that was true, he was afraid that it was only the best bit of his memory, the happiest moment he could recall, and that the rest of his parents' lives could have been just as miserable as his own.

Harry was lying on his bed, trying to decide whether he was hungry enough for a snack now or should wait for the feast that was sure to be served at midnight, when a tapping sound on the window made him sit up. Hedwig was back, he thought, but she was only carrying a letter this time, not a parcel, and as he hurried across the room to let her in, he wondered who it could be writing to him.

Hedwig hopped onto her perch as he let the window swing open, and Harry untied the letter from her leg. It was addressed in a spidery, unfamiliar handwriting to:

Mr. Harry Potter
The Cupboard under the Stairs
4 Privet Drive
Surrey

Harry turned the envelope over in his hands and tore it open. There was only one piece of paper inside, and it was covered in the same spidery handwriting:

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Please find enclosed a list of books and equipment you will need for your first year at Hogwarts.

The term begins on September 1. We await your owl by no later than July 31.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall
Deputy Headmaster

Harry read the letter through twice, then ran downstairs to the kitchen, where his aunt and uncle were sitting at the table.

"Here," he said, handing the letter to his uncle.

Uncle Vernon took the letter and read it, his face turning purple as he read. When he had finished, he leapt to his feet and ran out of the room. Harry heard the sound of his uncle's footsteps as he ran upstairs and then the slam of a bedroom door. Aunt Petunia and Dudley looked up from their newspapers and stared at Harry as if they were waiting for him to explain his uncle's behavior.

Uncle Vernon came back into the room and sat down at the table. He cleared his throat and said, "Well, it's quite clear that this lunatic must be stopped, of course, but I have a plan. We will send him a letter of our own, saying that he is not to come to us, and that we don't want anything to do with him."

Harry laughed. He had a feeling that his uncle's plan would not work, and he was sure that he was right when, the next morning, he woke to the sound of his owl scratching at his bedroom door.

Hedwig had left the room with a flick of her tail as Harry had opened the door to let in a tawny owl carrying a letter in its beak. Harry had signed for the letter and ripped it open as he had run back to his bedroom, but he had read only the first few lines when his uncle had snatched it from him and torn it into small pieces before locking it in his bureau.

Harry had spent the rest of the morning in his bedroom, waiting for more letters, but no more had arrived. He had eaten his lunch in silence while his uncle had ranted and raved about the insanity of the postmaster at Hogwarts for not understanding that his letter had been ignored. Harry had gone back to his bedroom as soon as he had finished, in the hope that his uncle would have a fit if he stayed in the same room as his owl, but he had been disappointed when Hedwig had flown back to her perch without a letter tied to her leg.

Harry had spent the afternoon of his eleventh birthday in his bedroom, with his aunt and uncle shouting at each other downstairs and his cousin Dudley sulking in front of the television in the living-room. Harry had been hoping that his uncle would be too afraid of the owls to stay in the house on his birthday, in case more letters arrived, but his uncle had simply ordered Harry to make himself scarce and had spent the morning trying to force Harry's owl into a cat carrier he had bought for the journey to his brother's house in Surrey. The owl had bitten his uncle quite hard on the thumb before he had managed to shove her into the carrier, and Harry had had to pretend that he was coughing very loudly indeed in his bedroom for the owl to be able to hoot and rattle her cage without his uncle hearing her.

Harry had spent the last few days before his birthday in a state of nervous excitement, jumping at every noise in the hope that more letters would arrive, but he had received no mail at all except for his birthday cards from his friends Ron and Hermione, which had been stamped and sent from London, where Ron and Hermione were spending their Easter holidays with Ron's family.

Harry's uncle Vernon was convinced that the Hogwarts letters had been a hoax from the very beginning, and had spent the last few days of the holiday in a state of tense anticipation, waiting for a gang of thugs to turn up on his doorstep and demand compensation for his son's time. Harry had tried to explain that the Hogwarts staff would have to send a witch or wizard to persuade his aunt and uncle that they had made a mistake in the first place, and that they would not be able to leave without Harry if they did not want to be turned into ferrets, but his uncle had refused to let Harry mention the subject in his presence, so Harry had been unable to tell his uncle that he was sure that the Hogwarts staff would be very angry indeed if they had to come all the way to Surrey to fetch him.

Harry woke on the morning of his eleventh birthday to the sound of his owl hooting softly to herself in her cage. He had hardly been able to sleep that night, in the hope that more letters would arrive at midnight, and he was very tired and very bad-tempered. He dressed and went downstairs to find his uncle, aunt and cousin already seated at the breakfast table, and he had to spend half an hour trying to persuade his uncle that it would be quicker to carry the owl cage downstairs than to let Harry use the broom cupboard as a shortcut.

"Happy birthday," said his aunt, with a malicious smile, when Harry had finally sat down to his cold bacon and toast. She and Uncle Vernon had given Harry a pair of socks each for his birthday and had wrapped them in a newspaper to make it look as if they had gone to the trouble of buying him a proper present.

Harry thought of the birthday cards that he had received from his friends that morning. Ron had sent him a chocolate cake that tasted as if his mother had made it, and Hermione had sent him a book about quidditch (the game played on broomsticks that Harry loved more than any other game in the world) because she knew that he had nothing to read while he was stuck with the Dursleys. Hedwig had bitten Hermione's ankle when she had tried to stroke her, but Harry was very fond of his bushy-haired friend and was glad that she had found such a good way of making herself welcome.

Dudley was busy opening his birthday cards and was now sorting through his pile of presents to see whether his parents had been foolish enough to give him any money. Harry watched his cousin tearing the wrapping paper off a large box and guessed that it was clothes, since it was too heavy for it to be anything else. Dudley had already received two new suits, a computer, a video recorder and a mountain bike from his parents, and Harry was sure that Dudley was disappointed that his parents had not managed to give him enough cash to buy a new car when he was old enough to drive it in two years' time. Dudley was a very large, very spoiled boy, and Harry was quite sure that Dudley was the only person he had met who was fatter than he was, because his cousin was so much taller that he could carry his weight much more easily than Harry could carry his own.

Dudley's birthday was the only day of the year on which Harry was allowed to eat as much as he liked, in the hope that he would be too fat by the end of the day to fit into his school uniform and would have to stay at home while his parents took their son out to buy a new one. Harry was not very fond of his school uniform, because his cousin Dudley had grown so much that his parents had been able to buy him a new one every year, and Harry was forced to wear the clothes that Dudley had worn when he was smaller and fatter than Harry was now. Harry was not very fond of his cousin Dudley either, but he was quite pleased that Dudley was going to have to spend his birthday being weighed and measured and fitted for glasses, because Dudley had been very nasty to Harry ever since he had found out that Harry was a freak, and Harry was hoping that Dudley would be miserable for the rest of the holidays because he was being forced to wear a pair of spectacles that looked even uglier than his face.

Harry was jolted out of his daydream by his uncle Vernon, who was reading his newspaper and muttering about the incompetence of the people who were in charge of the country, and Harry was pleased to see that his uncle was in such a bad mood that he was muttering so loudly that he was sure to be overheard by his neighbors. The doorbell rang at eleven o'clock and Harry's aunt and uncle stopped in the middle of their breakfasts to glare at each other in the hope that each of them would force the other one to answer the door. Harry had to leave the room to fetch the mail, and he was glad that he had an excuse to do something that was not housework because his aunt and uncle were still arguing about whose turn it was to wash the saucepans when they had finished eating breakfast.

The doorbell rang twice more while Harry was washing the saucepans, and by the time he had dried the last one and ran upstairs, his aunt and uncle were each holding a letter and looking as if neither of them had won the argument. Uncle Vernon was muttering something about the cost of stamps nowadays and how he was sick and tired of being expected to pay for his nephew's upkeep, and Harry guessed that his aunt had been forced to open the door and take in her nephew's birthday present.

Dudley was sitting on the floor in front of the television when Harry came back into the living-room, and he was examining his new video recorder with a frown on his fat, sulky face. Harry was sure that Dudley was disappointed that his parents had not managed to buy him a new car, and he

"Yes." Mr. Wonka's face turned to stone. "Now, what do you think of that? Do you think it's fair? Do you think it's just? Do you think it's right? Do you think it's decent?"

Now embarrassing.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said to the head of the spirit camera. "I'm very sorry. I didn't know. I didn't know that you had to be with them. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. I'm very, very, very sorry. I'm very, very, very,

The sand scows and dairy farms
Are the only signs of life
Between the Gulf of Mexico and
Tampa.

In which Harry's lawyer
Gets a surprise.

"Harry, looked at thing, the bleak set of palmetto
and pine, the sand scows and dairy farms, and said:

"Harry, Tom never celebrated until you had to drop
everything and come to Tampa. It's not another trip, is it?
Tom wouldn't be celebrating if it was another
market manipulation."

"Tom wouldn't know about it."

"Harry, you don't mean that you've stolen stock?"

"Of course not."

"Then what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Harry, Tom's dying." "Dying, nuts. Tom's
never been sick a day in his life. He's been
celebrating his birthday for the last three days.
Anyone who knows him knows that. Tom's
dying! Tom's been celebrating his birthday
for the last three days. He's drunk. Tom's
dying! Tom's been celebrating his birthday
for the last three days. He's drunk. Tom's
dying! Tom's been celebrating his birthday
for the last three days. He's drunk. Tom's
dying!"

Harry's voice in the train grew exceedingly
nervous. Tom was his only relative. Tom
owed his entire fortune to Harry's
speculations. Tom was the only person
who had ever been kind to Harry. Tom was
the only person who had ever been
interested in Harry's success. Tom was the
only person who had ever been proud of
Harry. Tom was the only person who had
ever been a father to Harry. Tom was the
only person who had ever been a mother
to Harry. Tom was the only person who
had ever been a friend to Harry. Tom was
the only person who had ever been a
relative to Harry. Tom was the only person
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"Well, I'm sorry to interrupt your tea and whatever, but I've just been on the phone to Mr Fairfax, and he's drawing blank left, right and centre. Apparently, Lord Ashton's gone to ground, and he's not answering his phone either. Mr Fairfax's been trying to get hold of him for the past few days, and he's starting to be worried. Seems there's some kind of business deal he's trying to pull off, and he needs his lordship's signature on the dotted line. Mr Fairfax's been trying to get hold of his lordship's friends and family, and he's even tried calling Lord Ashton's lawyer, but he hasn't had any luck. Mr Fairfax's been trying to get hold of his lordship's friends and family for the past few days, and he's starting to get worried. He's been trying to get hold of his lordship's friends and family by sending them letters and sending them telegrams, but he's not getting any replies. Mr Fairfax

Fifty-nine years ago, Hanna-Barbera's Yogi Bear made his first appearance in the pilot episode of the cartoon series *The Huckleberry Hound Show*. Yogi's popularity soon made him the star of his own series, *The Yogi Bear Show*, which ran for three seasons, from 1961 to 1962. Yogi's antics were based on those of Jellystone Park's resident bear, Boo Boo, who would try to steal picnic baskets from the park's visitors, which frequently resulted in his being chased by Ranger Smith. Yogi's catchphrase, "I'm smarter than the average bear," was a play on the phrase "I'm smarter than the average man," and he spoke and behaved like a human. Yogi's sidekick, Boo Boo, was a cub who was smaller than Yogi and who was more intelligent than Yogi. Yogi was voiced by Daws Butler, who also voiced Boo Boo, Ranger Smith, and Yogi's friends Huckleberry Hound and Snagglepuss, and Boo Boo was voiced by Julie Bennett.

Yogi's friends, Huckleberry Hound and Snagglepuss, appeared in episodes of *The Yogi Bear Show* that were not about Yogi. Huckleberry Hound was a blue hound who was a bounty hunter, and Snagglepuss was a pink mountain lion who was a playwright and who was prone to exclaiming, "Exit stage left!" and "Exit stage right!" Huckleberry Hound was voiced by Butler, and Snagglepuss was voiced by Hanna-Barbera's Daniel Ridgway Knight.

Yogi's girlfriend, Cindy, was a bear who was smaller than Yogi and who was more intelligent than Yogi. Cindy was voiced by Bennett. Yogi's boss, Ranger Smith, was voiced by Knight. Yogi's friends Huckleberry Hound and Snagglepuss appeared in episodes of *The Yogi Bear Show* that were not about Yogi. Huckleberry Hound was a blue hound who was a bounty hunter, and Snagglepuss was a pink mountain lion who was a playwright and who was prone to exclaiming, "Exit stage left!" and "Exit stage right!" Huckleberry Hound was voiced by Butler, and Snagglepuss was voiced by Hanna-Barbera's Daniel Ridgway Knight.

Yogi's girlfriend, Cindy, was a bear who was smaller than Yogi and who was more intelligent than Yogi. Cindy was voiced by Bennett. Yogi's boss, Ranger Smith, was voiced by Knight.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fifth season of the cartoon series *The Flintstones* that was first aired on February 1, 1963. In the episode, Fred and Barney go fishing, and Barney's fishing pole is broken by a bear named Yogi. Fred and Barney try to get Yogi to stop stealing their picnic baskets, but Yogi ends up stealing their fishing pole. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fifth season of the cartoon series *The Jetsons* that was first aired on February 1, 1963. In the episode, George Jetson's boss, Mr. Spacely, is forced to take his family on a vacation to Jellystone Park when his son, Elroy, is kidnapped by Yogi Bear. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fourth season of the cartoon series *The Smurfs* that was first aired on February 1, 1983. In the episode, Papa Smurf and Smurfette are kidnapped by Yogi Bear, and the Smurfs must rescue them. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fourth season of the cartoon series *The Jetsons: The Jetsons Meet the Flintstones* that was first aired on February 1, 1987. In the episode, Yogi Bear steals Elroy's spaceship, and the Jetsons and the Flintstones must rescue Elroy from Yogi. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fourth season of the cartoon series *The Flintstones: Wacky Inventions* that was first aired on February 1, 1992. In the episode, Yogi Bear steals Fred's invention, and Fred and Barney must get it back from Yogi. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fourth season of the cartoon series *The Flintstones: Dino's Quest* that was first aired on February 1, 1993. In the episode, Yogi Bear steals Fred's invention, and Fred and Barney must get it back from Yogi. Yogi's voice was provided by Butler.

"Yogi Bear" was the name of the episode in the fourth season of the cartoon series *The Flintstones: Bedrock Buddies* that was first aired on February 1, 1994

Narrators
Commentators
Tricksters
Chorus
(See the end of the chapter for **Legend**)

Here's spoiler the end: Ava sharply slows, her spine-tingling sense of danger kicking in. Ahead, Jacob's Ford Focus pulls into a parking space, and Ava's heart sinks as the gentle-mannered man with the gaunt features and the pale-green eyes of the Hollowgrass sub-model emerges from the car. Ava's mouth goes dry as Jacob's eyes lock on her, and he begins to walk toward her.

Wait, wait, wait, Ava thinks, as the Focus's door opens and Jacob's feet touch the ground. Why would Jacob be here? Ava's mind whirls. Jacob's Focus is a few blocks away from the Hollowgrass sub-model's place, and Ava's mind jumps to the conclusion that Jacob's Focus is the car that the Hollowgrass sub-model drives, and that Jacob's Focus is the car that the Hollowgrass sub-model drives because the Hollowgrass sub-model is Jacob. Ava's mind jumps to the conclusion that Jacob's Focus is the car that the Hollowgrass sub-model drives because the Hollowgrass sub-model is Jacob because

"Yes, I know," he said, shaking his head.

"Yet you still have the audacity to come to Ithaca?"

"Of course I have the audacity to come to Ithaca," he said.

"Do you know what I'm the most ashamed of?"

"Tell me," said Tiresias.

"I'm ashamed of the fact that I'm the most ashamed of."

"Why do you think I'm ashamed?"

"Because I'm the most ashamed of being ashamed

Gently, the Sunbeam Ella Mae Harris and Sabbath Sunshine Sweetness Harris, Sabbath's twin sister, Sunbeam Ella Mae Harris, Sabbath's twin sister, Sunbeam Ella Mae Harris, Sabbath's twin sister, Sunbeam Ella Mae

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Chapter 1

The Dark Lord Ascending

Lord Voldemort's wand hand was now quite steady. The Elder Wand, the most powerful of all wands in existence, was his at last, and he was ready to take his revenge upon those who had dared to oppose him, those who had dared to defy him, those who had dared to think that they could live their own lives, marry whom they pleased, work at the jobs they pleased, without his permission. He was ready to take his revenge upon those who had dared to think that they could live their own lives as if he, the Dark Lord, had never existed, as if he had not the power to ruin their lives whenever he chose, as he had ruined the lives of those who had once been his followers, who had thought that they, too, could live their own lives when they had grown tired of serving their master, who had thought that they could ignore his summons and live quietly, as if he had never existed, as if they had not been his servants for years, as if they had not been his most trusted followers, as if they had not helped him to torture his victims and carry out his plots, as if they had not been his friends and his family for years, as if they had not been his own flesh and blood.

He was ready to take his revenge, he could hardly wait to take his revenge upon those who had dared to think that they could live their own lives without his permission, those who had married Muggles and had children who were half-Muggles, those who had married witches and wizards who had not proved their worth by passing a series of tests devised by his followers, those who had married witches and wizards who had not been pure-blooded, those who had married witches and wizards who had not been of his own blood, those who had married witches and wizards who had not been his equals in every way, those who had married witches and wizards who had not been his own kind, those who had married witches and wizards who had not been his own flesh and blood.

He was ready

Sometimes, Harkness's tactics are almost comical. Sometimes, Harkness's tactics are almost comical. Sometimes, Harkness's tactics are almost comical.

Sidebottom's wife, Sidebottom's children, Sidebottom's dog, Sidebottom's cat, Sidebottom's goldfish, Sidebottom's hamster, Sidebottom's gerbil, Sidebottom's stepmother, Sidebottom's stepfather, Sidebottom's stepsister, Sidebottom's stepbrother, Sidebottom's stepdog, Sidebottom's stepcat, Sidebottom's stepgoldfish, Sidebottom's stephamster, Sidebottom's stepgerbil, Sidebottom's stepwife, Sidebottom's stepchildren, Sidebottom's stepdog's fleas, Sidebottom's stepcat's fleas, Sidebottom's stepgoldfish's fleas, Sidebottom's stephamster's fleas, Sidebottom's stepgerbil's fleas, Sidebottom's stepwife's fleas, Sidebottom's stepchildren's fleas, Sidebottom's stepdog's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepcat's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepgoldfish's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stephamster's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepgerbil's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepwife's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepchildren's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepdog's fleas's fleas's fleas, Sidebottom's stepcat's 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Voldemort wouldn't allow them to leave St. Mungo's without getting the results back so that every malady's ruled out. "But this benefits everyone. We don't have as much back and forth to bother with and now we know it'll all be in, er, good faith. So, yeah." That's about the extent of the diplomacy he's capable of, completely out of place in the role beyond failing to smooth over some of Ron and Hermione's more prickly spats. McGonagall's eyes shine with pride, even tinged with sadness as it is. It's enough to have him sitting a little taller in his bed.

"We'll need to get the Ministry involved, if the larger truce and pardonings are to hold," Moody bites out.

"Very well." Voldemort speaks at last, and multiple bodies in the room jump, startle. "Gather what representatives you may. What location do you suggest?" He still rolls his wand lightly between his fingers, opposite hand grasping the wandtip. Meditative or threatening, the world may never know.

As Moody identifies a discreet location outside Bristol, Harry wonders why they aren't just meeting at the Ministry itself, then realizes that would probably cause a public panic. What other reason could they have for all gathering together than a dissolved agreement? Or something else equally terrifying, destabilizing. Not very secure either, and who knows what remaining members of that dark wizarding band might be lingering around, waiting for the next opportunity. He can spy Ron doing the same mental math.

Hermione and Lupin are still watching him with sharp, quiet sorrow and checking-over motions of the eye, as if to ensure he's really alright. Fred and George are lounging at the back of the room, whispering together non-conspiratorially for once. Mr. Weasley has his hands stuffed in his trouser pockets, either in calm or to hide their shaking.

The room is packed full of people Harry cares for and it doesn't matter that there's a canyon wide and deep enough between them to house an ancient river.

It doesn't matter that there's peace without amity, prosperity without sufficient sacrifice. It doesn't. It's all going to be alright.

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The dusk air is cool and pleasant, the sky a faded palette of blues and whites. Tall strange stones encircle one another in the twilight moment, Stonehenge as majestic as ever.

It had taken less than a day and a half to finalize the new Vows, the Order eager to re-establish a former peace agreement and the Ministry in firm alignment with that view. Voldemort had been equanimitous, non-reactive to the point it only seemed to spike everyone's anxiety higher. Firm in his stance, blank in his bearing. It is, Harry has come to realize, the confidence of a great snake in the presence of lesser predators it can't be bothered to concern itself with. And it helped that every other person was walking on eggshells to avoid upsetting the delicate balance of peace. It's like ever since Harry was taken off the chessboard, Voldemort's been difficult to rile. Comfortable in the seat of his power. The heavy hand of prophecy lifted, or something like that. Once Harry was marked as an equal through the soulmark rather than the curse scar, enmity turned into avarice and Voldemort's succeeded in having it, having him, even at personal cost.

It had felt so strange, so right, to sit by his side for the negotiations instead of across the table for once. So very difficult not to kneel down, put a hand on Voldemort's leg, and just beg for him to concede every addendum. It wouldn't have worked, it's important Harry understand that, remember that - but the instinct in itself holds a power of its own.

Harry didn't die yesterday, and yet he didn't not from a technical standpoint. Voldemort's yet to explain that part, all their free time consumed by peace planning.

But if Voldemort can be patient, so can Harry. All in due course.

Harry can see an officiant in Ministry red at the center of the stone circle, with people clustered at the opposite sides, half in all black and half in typical wizarding wear. The circle still has its protections against violent acts, which no one had the opportunity to explain to Harry before, increasing the odds of the first ceremony not ending in mass murder. It's all just like before. But this time, Harry's calm, he's steadfast, he's ready. Running away is the last thing on his mind.

They approach from the south on quiet feet, crunching in dried pale grass. Harry takes Voldemort's hand and walks on.

Wind rustles the swaying grasses, a million blades brushing against a million million more. It calls to mind the infiniteness of the universe, the inviolability of nature; that even when things die or species end or volcanoes erupt, life surges onwards, unstoppable.

Harry and Voldemort walk to Stonehenge and will follow through on the promises they have made to one another. And after, they will wander the evening plains in search of only the satisfaction of uncomplicated exploration, of quiet company. They will wander and discover and build and destroy, onwards, unstoppable, until the moon sinks and the sun rises and burns out, until the universe tilts on its side and folds in on itself, and walk on further still.

Notes:

To all who commented and kudosed and lurked, let me just say - thanks homies! See you laters, alligators ᗜ(˘ω˘)_/ ˙˖.☆.°.˙

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