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Harry Potter & the Fortress of Shadows

Chapter One: An Unexpected Portkey

Ron scratched his nose, staring around with a thoroughly unimpressed look on his face. "Where the bloody hell are we?"

"I dunno." Harry sighed from where he had landed on the ground. "It must be Thursday," he grumbled. "I never did get the hang of Thursdays."

"Or portkeys," Ron remarked with a grin, holding out a hand to help Harry up. "Any idea where we are, Hermione?"

She shook her head, cradling Crookshanks to her chest. "No," she said. "Sorry." Hermione frowned. "But, honestly, who would have thought that the Green Flame Torch would be a portkey?"

"I know what you mean," Harry said. He pushed up his glasses. "Especially after all the trouble we went to getting to the Pyramids of Furmat."

"And after all the trouble I went to deciphering those runes on the Pillar of Storgé," Hermione added.

Harry suddenly frowned at the portkey Hermione was still holding. "That's weird, shouldn't Icicle have been right behind us?"

Ron shrugged, on the verge of a sneezing fit as Hermione scanned the torch with her wand, trying to trace where their icy friend may have got to.

"I guess now isn't the time for jokes about fire, huh?" Harry laughed, giving Ron a tissue from his pocket as Crookshanks threatened to scag his shoes for firing snotballs at him.

"That's not funny, Harry, she must have got trapped half-way between Grimmauld Place and wherever we are. Which can only mean one thing," she concluded, a sense of foreboding overwhelming her small features. "We're going to have to put the whole Horcrux plot on hold and go do that "saving people" thing again."

Harry gave a whoop for joy, whipping his wand out very suddenly, a huge grin on his face. Hermione rolled her eyes as she picked Crookshanks back up and tucked the torch under her arm.

"That's not fair," growled Ron, handing the grotty rag back to Harry, wiping the remaining slime from his nose on the back of his sleeve. "That leaves me no time to have a romantic yet totally irrelevant and irrational subplot. I want my snogs, dammit!"

Hermione looked between the cat and Harry, who, the moment he caught her eye, started shaking his head viciously.

"No, no way. That's just wrong. He's Ginny's brother and my best friend! No. I refuse to do it. Go get your homoerotic kicks from the internet like normal people."

Crookshanks simply screwed up his face, entirely unamused.

"Alright. Ron, if I snog you, then will you shut up? We need to get on with saving Icicle so we can get back to finding all the Horcruxes and destroying them so that Harry can have a peaceful life

bonking your sister. You know, because he and his beast love her."

Ron huffed. "No, that's alright, Harry. I'll do without the snogging for now."

"For now?" repeated Harry, a slight tremble in his voice.

Hermione cleared her throat. As much as she wanted to see Harry and Ron kissing (damn, that was an image that was going to be haunting her for a while) there was work to be done. "We've got someone to save," she reminded them as the boys turned to look at her.

Harry brightened immediately. "Wicked. Where shall we start?"

Hermione stroked her chin thoughtfully. "Well, the obvious answer would be at the beginning..."

"A very good place to start," agreed Ron.

"So, that would be where?" asked Harry, playing the loveable idiot for all he was worth and hoping like hell no one would notice he really was that stupid.

"Honestly," huffed Hermione, "did you never read *The Universe: A History*?" She cleared her throat. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was Shazam..."

"So you're saying we lost Icicle when we were using the time-turner in conjunction with the portkey?" asked Ron, sounding uncharacteristically as if he was listening. Hermione looked both shocked and impressed.

"Yes."

"Which means she could be just about anywhere?"

"Yup."

"We're screwed." sighed Ron, slumping down on a damp rock as Harry lit his wand, looking around.

"We need a way of contacting Ginny, Neville and Luna. Maybe she's with them."

"I suppose it's better than sitting around doing nothing," agreed Hermione, looking pointedly at Ron as they walked through a nearby dark tunnel, trying to find an exit. Harry came to a halt. "Doesn't this place seem familiar?"

"A bit," Hermione relented.

"Looks a bit like Hogwarts." Ron was as helpful as ever.

"I think it is Hogwarts," Harry agreed. "This looks like the dungeons. If I'm right, the Entrance Hall should be at the top of those stairs." The light from his wand illuminated a stone staircase, and Harry started up them, confident that they'd be able to get everything sorted soon. Who knew: maybe they'd even be home in time for tea.

At the top of the stairs, Harry held back, signalling to Ron and Hermione to stay quiet when he heard laughter.

"Hey, Moony. Did you see Snivellus' face?"

"Yeah," a second voice agreed. "Almost felt sorry for him. Almost," the voice added hastily.

Harry peeked out and then looked back at Ron and Hermione, pale in the face. "We're in Hogwarts," he confirmed. "But I think we might have a slight problem."

Hermione, unsurprisingly, worked it out quicker than Ron.

"We're at Hogwarts at the same time as your Dad?" she gasped. "Oh no!"

"Why 'oh no'?" asked Harry, who was quite warming to the situation. After all, it'd be nice to meet his dad for once. He rather suspected he had unresolved 'daddy issues', what with being from a broken home and all that. Well, less broken than blasted apart by Voldemort.

"Cause we'll meet the Marauders and I'll inevitably fall in love with Snape or something and end up being your mother!"

Ron looked confused. "Why?"

Hermione looked exasperated. "Well ... just 'cause, okay?"

Ron scowled. "Don't see why it has to be you," he muttered, "might be me who falls in love with Snape. Or at the least, has a torrid affair with him, destined to end in heartbreak and bitterness."

Harry sensed the attention was being drawn away from him. "It might even be me."

Hermione and Ron both gave him long, what-the-hell-are-you-thinking looks.

"You hate Snape more than anyone," said Hermione.

"Yeah, but..." Harry waved his hands. "You know, hate turns into love and all that. Like me and Draco. Ginny suggested that him and me get together for group counselling at some point."

Hermione and Ron both looked at each other and made a joint decision to change the subject, for different reasons.

"Let's just not fall in love with anyone, okay?" suggested Ron.

"Especially you, Harry," warned Hermione. "You must not, I repeat, NOT fall in love with your mum. You'll only end up becoming your own father."

"Really?" Harry stroked his (still stubble-free) chin thoughtfully. "Explains why I thought I saw my dad sending that Patronus when the Dementors were attacking me and Sirius..."

"NO!" said Hermione.

"I say, Moony, Prongs," came a voice, "there's some people down here."

"Groovy, Padders," said another. "Who're they?"

"I'll find out." A boy of their own age dropped down in front of them. He swept shiny black hair from in front of his face. "Hi," he said.

Harry and Ron were surprised to hear a thump from behind them. They turned. Hermione had fainted dead away with a blissful smile on her face.

"Now look what you've done," said Ron, exasperated. "You broke Hermione!"

Harry, however, was staring at the newcomer. "We really are in the seventies."

Ron looked up sharply from where he was helping Hermione up. "Are you serious?"

A bemused look spread across the newcomer's handsome face. "Yeah. How'd you know my name?"

"He said 'serious', not 'Sirius'," Harry explained, feeling that this was all a little too surreal.

"Ah. Right. That happens a lot." He turned on Harry, raising his eyebrows as he took in the familiar face. "Prongs?" he called over his shoulder, voice wavering. "What was that stuff we were smoking last night? Because... damn."

James stepped forward, suddenly able to see what Sirius was frowning at. Lupin too had approached the group, arms folded, an amused expression on his face. "That'll teach you, stealing herbs from the Herbology stores!"

Prongs ignored Moony, instead choosing to walk right up to Harry, carefully reaching out and gingerly poking him. "He's real, Padfoot! It's not a hallucination."

Hermione, who was now being propped up by Ron, her head rested against his chest, frowned in deep concern.

"You've obviously fallen into a pensieve and, having changed a memory, you've landed yourself in a parallel universe. Duh."

Ron looked confused. "And here I was thinking we'd just travelled back in time."

"Back in time?" The young Remus Lupin looked sceptical. "How?"

"Er, bit of trouble with a portkey and time turner." Harry shifted uncomfortably, offering James a nervous smile. "Hi, Dad."

"Dad?" mumbled James, bemused, eyeing up the spectacled lad who looked as if he could well be his brother.

"This isn't funny, Remus. If you're trying to teach us a lesson then quit it. We've learnt, alright, no more taking liberties with school supplies. Now please stop this."

"It's got nothing to do with me," insisted Lupin, shrugging his shoulders, looking to Sirius and then James sympathetically.

As the reality of what was happening sunk in, Harry's lips spread into a stupid grin. His eyes shining, he turned to James, ecstatic, arms wide open ready to embrace his father in a bear hug. "You're alive! This means the end to my daddy issues!"

"On a rather more fatal note," Hermione interjected, "We've still got to find the Horcruxes."

"Horcruxes?" said Lupin interestedly. "What're they?"

"Um... evil Dark magic," said Ron. "Very bad mojo."

"It's a way of splitting your soul into several parts to prolong your life," explained Hermione, who had recovered enough to at least stand upright.

"Sounds good," said Sirius, quickly smoothing back his hair. He wasn't exactly attracted to Hermione but hey, she was female. "Bet we could master it in a couple of weeks. We managed to become Ani... mmp!"

James casually elbowed him in the stomach.

"It's all right," said Harry hastily, "we know about the Animagi thing already. You didn't have to hit Sirius."

"Yes, you did," muttered Ron, not liking the way Hermione was pulling her school jumper a little tighter across her chest.

"So, you need to find these Horcrotch thingies then?" asked Sirius. "We could help you!"

"Sounds like a plan!" said Harry excitedly.

"There could be a problem with that," interrupted Hermione thoughtfully. "We have no idea if Voldemort even has any Horcruxes by this point in time. And if he does, how in Merlin's name are we going to find them?"

"Oh, Gandalf's eyebrows, Hermione! You always know how to ruin our fun," moaned Harry. "We could be going on an adventure with my Dad and Sirius still alive and...uh..."

"What do you mean "still alive"?" demanded James and Sirius together.

"On second thoughts," said Hermione brightly, "let's go hunting Horcuxes!"

"Where should we start?" asked Harry quickly.

"Well," said James, "we found this funky room in the castle. It provides you with whatever you need. We call it, uh, the Room of Happy Pornness." He blushed.

"We don't," said Sirius, with a sly wink at Remus. "We call it the Doghouse."

"I don't think I know that room," said Harry bemusedly.

"Oh, well, it's this room that provides you with anything you need. Like, anything..."

"Oh," said Hermione and Ron together, "we know..."

"Where?" demanded Harry.

"Room of Requirement, silly," said Hermione. "Don't tell me you've never used it for anything like that!"

"No!" said Harry, a little too quickly.

"Ginny must be disappointed," muttered Hermione aside to Ron, who screwed up his face in disgust.

"There was this one time," said Harry slowly, "when I was, you know, needing to walk the dog..."

"We know that feeling," chipped in Sirius and Remus.

"...ew. Anyway, I went up there and went in ... expecting, you know, something good... and there was a bed, and lube, and tissues, and all these magazines... but they were full of pictures of guys! And I'm not gay!"

Sirius raised an eyebrow. "Nah, you are. Bent as a nine-bob note."

Hermione and Ron nodded in agreement.

James beamed. "You are my son after all!"

Chapter Two: The Plot Unravels

It took them some time to reach the Room of Requirement, but only because they had to revive Harry from the dead faint he had fallen into. After walking past three times and concentrating hard on what they really, really wanted, the door appeared and they went in.

"I didn't order bondage gear," said James after a moment. "I'm not in the mood today."

"My bad," said Sirius cheerfully, giving Hermione a look. "Mind was on other things."

"Let's try again," insisted Harry. "Now, everyone concentrate. We need something to help us find Voldemort's Horcruxes!"

"The only thing that's saving you all from eternal damnation is my pure mind," beamed Hermione, superiorly, as they prepared to focus and concentrate once more. This was greeted by many snorts as they all held hands and closed their eyes. Within seconds, there was a popping noise and the sound of a wooden door creaking open.

Being nefariously curious, both Harry and James snuck a look into the room, wands drawn, just in case.

"Oh, it's you," Harry sighed with a sense of relief as he clapped eyes on Ginny, Luna and Neville, all of whom looked somewhat bewildered, as if they'd appeared out of thin air.

Ron and Hermione barged into the room, closely followed by Lupin and Sirius, eager to see what was going on.

"Do you have a Horcrux?" Hermione enquired, a little half-heartedly.

Neville dug his hand into his pocket, a sheepish grin on his face, as he displayed a golden cup in his chubby palm.

"Oh, that's wonderful!" gasped Harry rushing towards Neville and hugging him. "A Horcrux!" He kissed his surprised friend on both cheeks.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. "No," she said dryly, "you're not gay..."

"I'm NOT!" yelled Harry, leaping back.

"What'd you kiss my arse cheeks for then?" asked Neville.

"Um..." Harry looked at the floor. "Gee, is that the time?"

"I never said I didn't like it," said Neville quietly.

"Nothing's changed at Hogwarts then," said Sirius cheerfully. "Still as gay as any public school."

"Pubic school?" asked Remus vaguely.

"You and your one-track mind," said Sirius fondly, patting him on the head.

"So," said James quickly, "plot development. What're we going to do next?"

"Find more Horcruxes?" suggested Ron, who hadn't said anything for a while.

"Destroy the one we've got here?" said Harry.

"Find young Voldemort now and kill him?" said Ginny.

"Can you imagine the time paradoxes that would come out of that?" snapped Hermione. "Haven't you ever watched Back to the Future?"

"So, we have four choices," said James in an organised (bossy, Harry thought) fashion. "One, we find more Horcrotches. Two, we destroy this one. Three, we kill this Voldemort fellow."

"And four?" asked Hermione.

"We stay in here," said Sirius with a lascivious grin, "and shag like bunnies."

"Or," contributed Ron, a sly look on his face. "We could put this cup to good use. Say, down the Hog's Head?"

"Now that's what I'm talking about!" declared Sirius, clapping Ron on the back, earning him a somewhat jealous glare from Lupin. "You're all far too uptight. Especially you, Miss I-wouldn't-know-beauty-products-if-they-bit-me-in-the-arse." he indicated, pointing at Hermione, with one arm around Ron's shoulders. "You never know, if you chill a little, you may even end up having some fun. This could be your lucky night."

"Hmph," sniffed Hermione, "we'll see about that." In her pocket, where no one could see, she fingered her vial of Felix Felicis. "Maybe I will..." she muttered.

"To the Hog's Head it is!" James declared with a rakish grin. Ron and Sirius gave a cheer in response; Remus attempted to look vaguely responsible, but it didn't last very long.

"We can't go drinking!" Hermione protested; Sirius' arm was still wrapped around her shoulders.

Harry nudged her in the side. "Perhaps if we get them a little drunk then they won't remember that we've been here."

"As long as no one tries to get me drunk and then sleeps with me," declared Hermione. Harry raised an eyebrow. "You know, you're going on about this an awful lot," he said. "Obsessing much?"

"No!" said Hermione, a little too quickly.

Just then a lovely redhead walked past. Both Harry's and James's eyes bugged out and their hearts did a tango.

"Harry," whispered Hermione urgently, "don't do that."

"Why not?" asked Harry, watching the redhead go by with more than a little interest. "D'you think if I asked her out...?"

"Harry," said Hermione, "that's your mother."

"Who cares?" He waved a hand. "That's it, baby, if you've got it, flaunt it, flaunt it!"

"Harry," Hermione begged, brown eyes pleading with him. "Please don't do this. Look what you're

doing to Ron!" She pointed and Harry followed her direction.

Ron had sunk to the floor, knees pulled up to his chest. He rocked back and forth as he covered his ears and murmured, "Make it stop. Please, make it stop. Oh, the images!"

"I've seen this before," said Remus quietly. "It's like his eyes have been turned into a cinema screen. It's called the kinetographa curse."

"Oh, help me!" cried Ron. "All I can see is Gone With the Wind. Giant Clark Gable is before my eyes ... oh, Scarlett O'Hara's breasts ... agh, Clark Gable again...!"

"That's pretty powerful Dark magic," said James, "which means only one thing."

"Voldemort?" asked Harry tentatively.

"No," said Sirius, his eyes narrowing. "Snivellus."

"Snape?! Where?!" declared Harry, whipping his wand out at double speed, bouncing on the spot like an eager beaver, his face all screwed up in what was supposed to be a cross between anger and intimidation. "I'll have that no good, low life, murdering son of a..."

Seemingly from out of nowhere, Hermione set on Harry with a taser and watched pleased as he fell to the ground in a crumpled heap, twitching periodically.

"His doctors say it doesn't do him any good, getting over-excited like that." Looking up, as if to explain better, she added, "He's got this whole hero complex thing. It gets annoying after a while."

Remus and Sirius looked at James who held up his hands in innocent. "What? He doesn't get it from me! I don't have a hero complex - I was scared of the dark until I was twelve." Sirius coughed. "Okay, fifteen," James corrected.

This time, Remus gave a polite cough. James scowled. "Fine. I'm still scared of the dark."

"You know, you can get some great glow-in-the-dark..." started Ron, before Hermione shot him a glare that clearly told him to shut up.

"Anyway, one of you lot carry Harry. We've got work to do." Sirius pouted, but Hermione remained firm, "And, no, we do not have time for a drink beforehand."

"Wait, where are we going again?" asked Neville, who was feeling left out.

"The Hog's Head," said Sirius, grinning.

"Do we really need to?" asked Remus tentatively. "I have feeling we're only heading there because you want a drink."

"Are you trying to tell us what to do, Moony?" asked James. "Going to pull out your Prefect's badge on us?"

"Watch it, Prongs," warned Sirius. "Remus is my bitch, remember. I tell him what we're going to be doing."

Hermione reflected on how lucky they were that Harry was unconscious at that moment. She didn't want to have to explain it all to him. Again. He really was slow on the uptake sometimes. Even the time she had explained it with diagrams hadn't gone in. One of these days she was going to set Fred and George on him and they could...

"Hermione?" said Ron. "You're drooling."

"What?" She wiped hurriedly at her chin with her sleeve. "Sorry."

In a hurry to finally get somewhere in this meandering plot they all leapt through a plothole and landed just outside the Hog's Head. The pub looked as dingy as it was (would be?) back in the future. Trying to look older than they were they all went in, sitting as inconspicuously as possible in a corner.

Harry had woken up by this point - though he was still a little groggy - and was gazing round the pub in a mildly unfocused manner.

"Hey, look over there," he whispered, gesturing towards another corner. "S'Malfoy."

"Draco?" asked Ginny. "But I left him in the Quidditch sheds ... back in the future, I mean." She flushed rather red.

"Who's Draco?" asked James. "That's Lucius Malfoy. He left Hogwarts a couple of years ago."

"What's he doing here?" asked Hermione.

"Maybe he's waiting for someone," said Sirius. He was eyeing Malfoy in a funny way: his tongue hanging out and eyes not blinking.

Sirius's prediction turned out to be correct. Lucius turned as someone walked in the door. It was a man in a long dark cloak, a hat pulled down over his eyes, a green lizard in his arms. He stroked its emerald scales delicately, rhythmically as he approached the group, his breathing heavy and ragged.

"I am sorry, am I interrupting something?"

"Interrupting something?" Sirius was using his best 'I-am-of-age-really' voice. "Of course not, we're just here for a quiet drink. Why? Dja wana make something of it? Do ya? Do ya?" Under the table he fingered his wand.

"Make something of it?" The voice was high and cold. Harry wondered if it was because of the lizard, something to do with the cold blood. "I doubt very much whether you would be any match for me dear boy."

"Excuse me, but would you mind leaving us alone, we're having a very important meeting here." Hermione did her Hermione-bit.

"A very important meeting? What about? Who's been mugged the most, or the best, you filthy mudblood?"

"Don't you dare call her that!" Harry, James and Ron yelled in unison, all jumping to defend her honour (what a wasted effort, that went several books back). Harry twirled his wand a la Lockhart and aimed it at the intruder's face.

"DENARIZARIUM!"

The wizard dropped his lizard, crying out in surprise as his nose began to grow at an obscene rate; he tried to cover it, yet it was already knocking against the table before it stopped growing. A few of the pub's patrons looked over in mild interest, but turned back to their pints as Hermione cast a Stunning Charm.

As he dropped to the floor, they all peered at the intruder, then looked at Lucius. "He's not with

me,” Lucius lied badly.

“Hmm. Let’s see who he is, shall we?” Hermione didn’t believe him for a second, getting up from her seat and tugging off the stranger’s hat.

Chapter Three: The Plot Falls Apart Completely

“Oh, do stop that!” said Harry. “Why does everyone seem to have the idea that I know absolutely nothing about sex? I have read *Mills & Boon* novels, you know!”

The lizard sniffed. “Well, pardon me for trying to advance the plot!”

“*Mills & Boon*, Harry?” asked Hermione. “I always had you figured as a *Bunty* reader myself.”

“I like *Spot the Dog*,” said Ron quietly.

“Oh, me too!” said Sirius. “The one where he lost his ball made me cry until he found it again.”

“I find them a bit intellectual myself,” muttered James. “I like watching paint dry.”

Remus groaned and banged his head on the table. “No wonder I have to sneak off to the library for my secret book club with Severus. There’s no one else I can have that deep level of discussion about intellectual books like *Casino Royale* and *Five Get Into a Fix*. If I end up falling in love with him and having a protracted affair over decades (while all my friends die and get locked up) that eventually ends in heartbreak when for reasons he can’t tell me he has to apparently betray us all for the greater good and I end up in a loveless marriage with a woman (Merlin forbid!) and we both die tragically before we can be reconciled in truth ... I’ll blame all of you for not listening!”

“You know, literary criticism aside,” said Hermione, “the lizard’s escaped.”

“Don’t worry,” said James, reaching under the table, “we’ve already got another spineless vertebrate to hand. I’ve just found Peter.”

In his embarrassment at being caught on his knees under the table, Peter’s face had turned a shade of pink akin to a ripe raspberry. “I was just tying my shoelace.”

“Don’t let Remus get you down, love,” Sirius told Hermione, a hand on her knee. “He can change his moods as much as my estranged baby cousin changes her hair, and she’s a Metamorphmagus!”

Hermione frowned, brushing Sirius’ hand away and not looking particularly perturbed by Peter’s appearance. “Before that lizard disappeared, did he say that he was trying to advance the plot?”

Ron looked baffled. “I didn’t know we had a plot.”

Pursing her lips, Hermione shook her head. “Maybe that’s why we’re here. Perhaps the Green Flame Torch brought us here so that we could find a plot!”

“You know,” said Ginny, who had been sitting on Neville’s lap for the last ten minutes, “I seem to remember Dumbledore muttering something about that when he shoved us into the Room of Requirement back in the future. Then we turned up here in the seventies.”

“Oh, has he been brought back from the dead *again*?” asked Hermione. “We should have buried him in a tomb with a revolving door.”

"Dumbledore's dead?" asked Remus, startled from his daydream of Snape bringing the *kama sutra* to their next book club. "Do you think we should warn him? How did he die?"

"Snape killed him," said Harry before Hermione could stop him from fucking up the timeline any more than he had already.

"Quick!" said James, who had about as much of an understanding of temporal paradoxes as his future son. "We've got to warn him!"

Hermione grabbed his arm with a surprisingly strong grip. Hefting all those books around had given her the muscles of a seasoned Beater. "We can't, don't you see? That would change history completely and undoubtedly lead to a Trousers of Time effect and that's isn't good for the cosmos! Time may be a ball of wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey stuff but stuff can kill you! Well, not you because Voldemort takes care of ... oh, wait, forget I said that ... but if you change the past, I mean, your future then we might cease to exist! If you warn Dumbledore about Snape then he'll never take him on as Potions master following Voldemort's first and frankly pathetic defeat (sorry, Harry, but for all that it made you famous it really didn't work long term, did it?) and then who'll save Harry in his first Quidditch match and every other time Snape's saved his life since? Not to mention there was something decidedly strange about that 'murder' on the Astronomy Tower, particularly as I swear I saw Colonel Mustard in the library earlier with some lead piping and Trelawney was muttering something about all the answers being 'in the cards' and specifically 'in the three cards in that little envelope thing in the middle'. Anyway, my point is that we can't warn Dumbledore because without Snape where's Harry going to get his ridiculously-inflated sense of righteous anger and hard-done-by-ness from?"

She sat back, took a deep breath and looked at the rest of them. They weren't paying any attention. A man on the other side of the pub had just put two ferrets down his trousers.