

Alliance of Families by StormFox

Hiding behind a bush, Harry Potter felt sadness wash over him. It was his safe space. The place he would visit when he wanted to get his thoughts in order or just needed some time alone. He was savouring his first minutes alone without the Dursleys, finally escaping the sheer amount of household work he had been forced to endure all summer.

Painfully suppressed memories of the graveyard popped into his mind. The images of Cedric when he had been hit by the Rat's dreadful green spell, lifeless eyes looking at Harry, an accusatory look on the student's face.

An overwhelming feeling of guilt washed over him.

It is my fault he was murdered, Harry sighed. Why did I have to try and share the victory?

What made things even worse was the reaction of Amos, Cedric's father. The older man's look of pure agony and disbelief still broke Harry's heart.

"No one should have to bury their son," Harry murmured, "It is just not fair."

He was still thinking about writing a letter to Cedric's father, even if it was just to tell him the truth about how his son died and how it was all his fault, but he couldn't bring himself to inflict any more pain.

Harry's body trembled, and a lone tear ran down his cheek.

"No one else can die because of me," he vowed to himself.

"Crying, Freak? Are you crying because your freak mom left you?"

Harry spun around. Lost in thought, he didn't notice that Dudley, his cousin, had found him, ready to indulge in his favourite hobby – bullying Harry.

"Talk, Boy! Did you swallow your tongue? Poor baby Potter," Dudley snarled with an ugly smirk.

"Just leave me alone, Dudley, not ri-," Harry attempted to respond when the fist of the older boy crashed into his chest, forcing the air out of his lungs. The last thing he saw before his vision went black and his body fell on the floor was the other fist flying right toward his face.

"-ke up, Freak."

Harry felt disoriented, his head throbbing painfully. He couldn't recall why he was lying on the floor or who the person who was talking to him was. Rough hands began to shake him violently, desperately trying to lift him up. When he finally managed to attempt to open his eyes, Harry was blinded by the streetlight, the throbbing headache worsening.

“We need to go home, Freak. Now! I’m hungry.”

Then Harry remembered the hit, and fury surged inside of him.

How dare he hit me? Enough is enough! Harry pulled out his wand, fully aware of the possible consequences of hexing his cousin. Should he be kicked out of Hogwarts and the magical world, it didn’t matter anymore. If all he was getting from it was pain, why would he keep trying to save all of them from Voldemort? He wasn’t going to let anyone treat him like trash anymore.

The tip of his wand was already glowing bright green, even though Harry didn’t know how he had learned to cast the spell of his nightmares. The cast was interrupted when the streetlight began flickering. Harry lost his focus, startled by the situation.

Harry felt something wasn’t quite right. Looking around, he wondered what was happening while keeping his wand in a ready position if he needed to defend himself.

This is weird... Why do all the lights in the street flicker?, Harry thought, puzzled.

That was when he saw the grass next to them starting to move. It started slowly at first as if a simple breeze was the reason it was moving. But it was only a short time before its movements increased in intensity. When he began to feel a cold wave roll over him, a realisation started to dawn on Harry.

And then he saw them: Twenty figures were floating around the corner of Privet Drive. Their long black cloaks hid all of their features except the grey, slimy hands raised towards Harry as if trying to pull him into a hug.

Why are there Dementors here in Little Whinging? Harry asked himself, *I thought they were limited to Azkaban?*

“What are you doing, boy? Stop it. You’re going to get expelled! I’m going to tell my parents!” Dudley shouted, his face masked with the terror the boy was facing. This reminded Harry of his cousin’s presence.

I need to help him. Even he doesn’t deserve this fate, he decided.

Aiming his wand at the nearest Dementor floating towards them, Harry concentrated on the one memory that did produce his patronus, his parents caring for him– the family he never had– and Sirius. But the thoughts didn’t create the big, happy feelings they usually would. Instead, he felt a pang of guilt. They were all gone, all gone because of him. Still, he tried to get Prongs to appear.

“Expecto patronum!” he shouted insecurely, hoping his silvery stag patronus would appear. But only some light mist formed, barely enough to be visible.

Knowing it wouldn’t be enough, he considered other memories he could use. First to his mind came Hermione and Ron, his best friends from school. He quickly shook this idea off when the raw disappointment of them ignoring him all summer started to surface. All the doubt and being left alone once again affected the memory too much to work.

When Harry looked back up, the Dementor was mere metres away. He had only one chance left. Thinking frantically about what would be enough, Harry pulled— against better knowledge— all memories of his favourite sport, Quidditch, into his mind, not having any better idea. Happiness started to fill Harry.

This is my last chance, Harry recognised through the thick mist that began clogging his mind.

Out of the corner, he could see a second Dementor reaching Dudley. Harry was unwilling to let him die; he would have to get the patronus now.

“Expecto patronum!” Harry shouted for the second time today, but only some dense mist left his wand. He willed the fog to move towards Dudley and the Dementor, who had started to pull the boy into the air on the hem of his shirt. Harry knew it wouldn’t be enough, but he had to try either way. The mist started to thin out the further it dispersed, only the tiniest amount hitting the Dementor, who quickly brushed it away.

Harry knew it was over; his mother’s crying overwhelmed his mind. Defenceless, he could only watch the Dementor pulling Dudley higher and higher, its second hand rising to remove the hood of their cloak.

What Harry saw brought shivers all over his body. A face without eyes or a nose appeared under the hood. The only thing visible on the pale grey, smooth face was a big open mouth in the middle of the bubblehead-like face. He could only watch as the Dementor started to pull Dudley’s face towards it. With each centimetre, they got closer, and a more enormous amount of white fog was being sucked out of the boy’s mouth.

A quiet “NO” was the only thing Harry could whisper in his weakened state when he saw their lips touch and a big glob of light leaving his cousin, being swallowed by the Dementor. With Dudley’s soul gone, it let the teenager’s lifeless body fall to the ground as if it was disposing of trash it didn’t need anymore.

Harry stood frozen in place from what he had witnessed when the other Dementor reached him. *I am sorry, Mum. I couldn’t do it; I disappointed you.* With this last thought, excruciating pain in his forehead washed over him when the Dementor’s lips touched his.

His world faded out as the Dementor’s icy touch pulled him deeper into despair. He could hear the eerie, soul-chilling wails of the creature echoing in his ears as his memories twisted and contorted, manifesting as his deepest fears and most painful experiences. The darkness seemed endless, and Harry felt his consciousness slipping away.

Harry’s body started to stir, aching in the most uncomfortable way it ever had, making him want to scream out in agony. The constant throbbing in his scar that he had carried with himself since the night in the graveyard felt like it was about to rip his head apart, maybe even his whole body. His mind was entirely consumed by the sheer agony that he was feeling; Harry didn’t notice the voice trying to talk to him, attempting to soothe his pain.

I want to die. Please let me die. I want no more. Harry thought desperately, tears of pain streaming down his face.

When he thought the pain couldn't get any worse, another wave of torment washed over his body, and he felt his scar physically rip apart. A warm, blood-like liquid spilt out of the fresh wound running down his forehead, but it was black and thick as honey. The more liquid emerged from Harry's head, the clearer his thoughts became, and the pain slowly faded away.

"Harry, come back to me. It will be over soon. Just hold on a little longer," a comforting voice repeated as if singing a weird chant. The tone of the voice was oddly familiar to him; he remembered it but couldn't put a name to its owner.

This was when Harry noticed that the texture of the ground beneath him was different. Gone were the rough paved stones of Privet Drive that had been digging into his arms and legs since he had crashed down. It was replaced by a warm but still hard floor of the granite he was now laying on. Continuing to explore the floor around him with his hands, Harry expected a large pool of blood to be right in front of his face but was surprised by the lack of it. The only thing he could feel was a steady river of the liquid flowing away from him.

Still feeling the blood-like liquid oozing out of the wound on his head, Harry tried to slowly open his eyes. However, he couldn't see anything, as if a thick white fog was lying over his eyes. In shock, Harry started searching for the glasses he had been wearing since infancy. When he noticed they weren't on his face, panic flooded his mind.

Where are my glasses? Harry desperately fidgeted around on the floor, trying to locate the glasses he seemed to have lost when he had been deposited from the Dementor.

The horror of the situation, as Harry lay defenceless and blind on the floor, started to overwhelm him. Panic took a firm hold of his actions. His movements became more uncontrolled and erratic, as if Harry was in a frenzy.

"Everything is alright, my boy; you are safe here," the voice, a male one, was trying to calm him. It was a steady and friendly voice, but its authority was unmistakable. The man sounded like somebody in his mid-twenties, but it conveyed the experience nobody of this age should be able to possess.

Harry was sure he had never heard the older man's voice, but it was soothing to him nonetheless. He knew now that he wasn't alone and didn't doubt this man's unspoken promise even for a second. He would keep him safe here, a feeling the young man didn't know.

Being safe was a foreign concept for Harry. He had never been safe before, not in Hogwarts or any other place in the wizarding world, and never when he had lived with the Dursleys. But now he felt safe, being protected by the robust and warm man next to him. It was a feeling Harry was savouring, making him relax entirely in the soothing warmth it radiated through his body.

Harry didn't know how long he was lying like that, unable to talk yet, when he felt a tingling, cold feeling under his skin moving towards his eyes. The feeling was foreign but familiar at the same time. It felt similar to the times Harry used powerful magic, especially transformations.

But it was different than usual. It was cold, so very cold. He couldn't understand how something could feel so warm and freezing simultaneously.

He noticed the presence moving around in his body, poking and probing every now and then. It made Harry shiver as it climbed higher and higher, starting from the tips of his toes. When the feeling reached his eyes, he could feel the sensation slow down, as if taking time to figure out what issue was within them since his birth. After what felt like an hour, the sensation started moving something in his eyes, evicting small waves of pain throughout Harry's body. He felt the throbbing ebb away in the blink of an eye, replaced by a sense of happiness that, strangely, didn't feel like his own. It felt a bit like how the sensation had felt just a few seconds ago; it felt familiar.

Finally, the feeling started to retreat into Harry's core, and his vision slowly began to clear. The fog lit up in small patches, letting glimpses of scenery through it, with the first thing in sight being a newspaper rack.

The daily prophet! Harry thought cheerfully.

But something wasn't right. The displayed papers were plain white as if they had never seen a drop of ink. Now that Harry had a moment to think about it, he started wondering why the rack was so transparent. It reminded him a lot of the ghosts of Hogwarts in their silvery, shiny visuals.

After taking in the rest of the scenery, Harry was able to recognise the place he was at. Memories flooded him—his first meeting with the Weasleys, the hope of a better life, and the enormous big red train, the Hogwarts Express. Standing in front of the majestic vehicle, Harry knew something weird had happened. He was at platform 9 3/4, at King's Cross station in London, clueless about how he got there.

Not a soul was around, and the only things he could see were the Hogwarts Express, ready for departure, and the trickle of blood that had finally stopped flowing from the wound in his head. The remaining liquid continued like a snake towards one of the benches at the platform, the end starting to trail away from Harry.

Filled with curiosity, the boy stood up, noticing the apparent ease of his movements. Only a faint glimpse of the pain he had carried his whole life was left. He knew that it had come from the sheer amount of abuse he had to endure in his youth; all the broken bones and concussions, followed by the neglect of those injuries, seemed to affect his body in the long term. Even Madam Pomfrey hadn't been able to fix the issues during his time at Hogwarts, stating they would be permanent. After years, he had come to terms with living with the pain as best as he could.

But now, it seemed to be almost gone. Harry didn't feel any pain in his muscles anymore. His bones felt as good as new. Most importantly, his constant headaches were also gone, both in his scar and the usual ones. He only felt a tiredness he wasn't accustomed to, a deep, satisfied tiredness from the feeling in his core.

Standing straight, Harry took a few cautious steps towards the bench, where blood trickling disappeared. The sight that he was greeted by left the boy in shock. A sickly-looking baby was lying under the seat, the last drops of the blood river currently pushed through the infant's navel area, penetrating the skin. The young body was trembling as if dunked into ice water, its body sickly thin.

When it opened its eyes, Harry recoiled. He immediately recognised the eyes looking back at him, the vicious red slits being burned into his mind from the duel he had at the end of last year.

"How is this possible? Why does this child look like Voldemort?" Harry shouted in utter confusion, unable to understand why he was there and what this baby was. He recognised the face. Now that he could connect the dots, he saw the expression of his year-long foe. The enemy that found him year after year, making his life terrible. The enemy that killed his parents but couldn't kill the one-year-old Harry Potter, making him The Boy Who Lived. The enemy that ripped away all the happiness he was supposed to have.

"Harry. I will explain."

Harry spun around, swearing under his breath. How could he forget the man calming him down? He recoiled again at the sight that awaited him when faced with the source of the voice. It was as if he was looking into a mirror. The man he was standing in front of had precisely the same features as him, from the black untamed hair to the high facial cheekbones, even his ears. Harry would have sworn they were clones if the person in front of him hadn't looked around a decade older.

That's when their eyes locked, and Harry could see their difference. The glistening eyes filled with unshed tears looked at the boy before him. They were the only thing revealing his father's fond and saddened soul through the reserved stance the man portrayed in his body language.

"Dad? Is that you?" Harry asked incredulously as his eyes started to water up, even though he dreaded the answer.

It couldn't be.

His father had been dead for over a decade. How could he be here?

"Yes, my son. It's me. Come with me. We have a lot to talk about and not enough time." James Potter said to his son, carefully keeping his composure as he held his hand out for the younger Potter to take.

Harry wanted to take the hand, immediately reaching out, when he remembered the baby under the bench. He didn't want to leave it there. It looked so miserable. He had to do something to help it, even if it looked like the foe that had inflicted him and his family so much pain.

"Can we do anything about this thing? We shouldn't leave it here," Harry pleaded to his father.

"I am sorry, son, but we can't. It doesn't have a chance anymore. Only a faint piece of a soul is left, and that part will also be collected soon. Son, we need to go," His dad wore an apologetic look on his face.

When Harry reluctantly took his hand, James led Harry towards a bench on the other side of the platform, right in front of the train.

"Am I dead?" Harry blurted out the moment they sat down.

"Not yet, my son. We are in Limbo right now. You are neither completely alive nor dead at the moment. You are right in between," James explained. He then stopped to think about how to explain everything to Harry. "I believe you can decide which way to take. It is your decision to get on the train and join the next big adventure or stay in your life."

"You sound just like Dumbledore when you say that," Harry chuckled, having heard that exact wording multiple times from his headmaster. Pondering about it, he realised that the headmaster seemed to have had an enormous influence on James. The stoic man in front of him was no longer the careless prankster he was back at school. James Potter had aged considerably.

"What happens on that great adventure? I don't think I want to go back. There is nothing that is holding me there. I'm scared, Dad," he admitted to his father, desperately seeking comfort.

"I know Harry. The world maltreated you. You shouldn't have to deal with the problems you have to deal with." James' words were filled with sadness. "You never chose any of this... Let me share something with you before you make your final decision.."

"When you were born, a prophecy was made, and ever since, it has affected both you and Voldemort, Harry. You were born into a war, a war so cruel, I had nightmares about it every night. That prophecy demands that YOU have to be the person to kill the Dark Lord. It can only be you, and we went into hiding to protect our young baby from the wrath of a serial killer." James finally told his son the things he had been keeping inside for so long. "I am sorry, but we let you down. He found us in the end. I cannot tell you the full prophecy. I am not allowed to. Find it in the ministry, my son, and listen to it. The magical world is probably on your shoulders. I would rather have you join us, but it's not the right time yet. Not until you are truly ready and have lived a long and happy life, maybe even some grandchildren for me and Lily." James winked suggestively after the last statement.

Harry was confused by all the information disclosed to him. *How could a teenager be expected to kill a full-grown wizard, especially the most potent wizard of the generation?* However, things were now starting to fall into place for him. He was finally able to understand why Voldemort had been trying so hard to kill him repeatedly. Why had the wizard taken Harry's blood for his resurrection ritual? Why did nobody tell him? Why was he treated like this if he was meant to kill the Dark Lord in the end?

“But why should I go back? I just want my freedom. I don’t care about the wizarding world anymore. They can die for all I care because of how they treated me!” Harry shouted into his father’s face.

He was furious, hurt by the secrets that were kept from him, the pain he was subjected to, and the training that he would have needed. Disappointed in the support he had been given from Dumbledore and all the other wizards. His anger spiralled higher and higher until he felt two strong hands pull him into an embrace, causing his rage to collapse like a house of cards, replaced by profound sadness. He knew that his father was right. He would need to return, unwilling to let the wizarding population lose this conflict. Even more than that, He wanted the dark lord killed by his own hands. He wanted to punish Riddle for what he did to him.

“I know, son. I know. But that isn’t you. I’ve seen it. You are a protector, just as my father had been. As much as I would like you to, Potters don’t run away from their respon-” James tried explaining to his son, but he was interrupted by the teenager.

“Is it my responsibility? I don’t think so, and maybe I should just run away like you did.” Harry blurted out, but once he saw the evident hurt in his father’s eyes, he instantly regretted his words. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean that.”

“It is alright,” a saddened James Potter said. “I’ve never been as brave as you or my father, Charlus. I never had to. Being born into a world of peace, there was no need to be prepared. I never learned my family’s magic because it wasn’t needed. Until the war started and you have become a target, we tried living a normal life. Then, it was too late; nobody could train me anymore when Charlus and my mother, Dorea, were killed by the dark lord. The only thing I tried since then was to protect you. I did EVERYTHING I could. I’m so sorry it wasn’t enough, Harry.”

The boy could see the feeling of utter defeat his father had experienced. He understood him. There was no need for a warrior, so his father developed into one only when it was almost too late.

“But I am not a fighter either, Dad. I am not taught well, have bad grades, and am not overly powerful.” Harry confessed. “I won’t be able to defeat him. I am nothing.” Harry could feel the arms around him tightening, squeezing him a little, the warmth of his father radiating towards him.

“Bullshit, Harry. Yes, you shouldn’t have been this lax with your education, but I can’t hold that against you as a former marauder. But that isn’t something you cannot fix. You have the drive you need!” James encouraged him. “And you are really powerful. Didn’t you feel your magic repair your eyesight? All of the other injuries you had? I’ve bloody seen it. You were glowing. Not even the old goat has produced such an aura in a long time.”

Harry thought about the tingling he had felt a few minutes ago and had to accept that his father was right. There was a lot of power inside of him. He could feel it. The power he didn’t have before everything that happened today was enclosed in his core. However, he sensed it lacked the pure warmth he was used to. He felt like something had come back, something that had

been inside him for a long time, and was now settling back into his core, readily greeted by the usual warmth.

“Dad, what is this feeling inside of me? This tingle. I remember it from using spells, but it is different now.” Harry questioned his father, fueled by curiosity. “Why does it feel different after I got kissed by the Dementor?”

James Potter chuckled at his son’s lack of knowledge until he saw Harry’s confused look. “You really don’t know? What did the old goat Dumbledore even teach you? The answer is quite simple: It is your magic.”

“Magic as we know it resides in all living beings, even the muggles. But it depends on how much of it you have and if you can access it. If you want to know more about it, you will find a book about it pretty soon.” James started to explain, taking a break after answering the first question.

An expression of uncertainty painted his face as he continued. “About the second question, I don’t know it either.” The older Potter ended his explanation, a shimmer of guilt twitching in front of his hazel eyes.

“What should I do now, Dad? How should I continue?” Harry asked, missing the glimpse in his father’s eyes. “Will I just wake up and train more than ever before? Will I get myself ready for the inevitable fight?”

The expression of the man changed into a more thoughtful look. “Yes, Harry. I believe you will just wake up. But even though it hurts me, I don’t think you should return as Harry Potter, at least not yet.”

Harry looked confused, not understanding what his father meant. “Not as Harry Potter? What do you mean, Dad?”

“I think it is time you become the lord you were destined to be. That would make your work a lot easier. You will have to be Lord Potter soon.” James explained further, raising his hand as he noticed his son wanted to talk back, silencing him. “Harry, stop. I know from experience that it is hard to walk this path. I hated politics just as much as you do. But it is the only way. The ministry will be coming for you. I wouldn’t even be surprised if they try to imprison you for performing a patronus on an open street. Fudge has always been a fool.”

“But I DEFENDED myself, Dad.” Harry roared in a barely concealed fury. “Aren’t we allowed to use magic in life-threatening situations?”

James laughed. “I mean, yes, theoretically, you are. But these are politicians we are talking about. They don’t have a sense of right or wrong and will use this to their advantage. I’ve seen it happen the last time around. To save you, they would have to admit that they lost control of these monsters if they didn’t send them themselves.”

Harry had to concede that point to his father. He knew which route the minister would take. They would lay the blame on ‘The boy who lived,’ would try to take him in, put him on trial, and

throw him into Azkaban, just as they did with Sirius all these years ago. Fudge would never put up the courage to help Harry. The minister instead took the coward's way of denying all the proof presented to him. He had to sustain himself like he always had done.

"You are right, Dad. I need to be strong right now, a strength my name cannot carry yet." Harry accepted his father's advice just as he started feeling a pulling sensation right around his navel. "Dad, it feels like something is trying to pull me away from here. I don't want to go yet."

James' eyes started to fill with tears, noticing that their time here was coming to an end.

"It will be alright, son. I feel it, too. We both have to go. Death wants me back and would like to take you, too. You need to go before he is here, son." The older Potter closed the gap between them once more and hugged his son tightly, trying to show his love for him with this simple physical act.

The boy revelled in the feeling a second time this day until he felt the pull strengthen. "Dad, I need to go. I can feel it. I love you, Dad."

"I love you too, Harry! Lily loves you. She wanted to be the one to come and see you, but it had to be me. We will wait for you. But make sure to live your life and find a woman just as wonderful as I've found. Someone who is going to tell me all your embarrassing stories." Chuckling, James reluctantly let go, stepping away as he saw Harry starting to fade away.

"Be careful, son." That was the last thing the proud father said before seeing Harry vanish with a determined look on his face.