

## **I can't draw, and I am not a British Lady.**

This is the small story update for FILFy, although that being said, it is larger than I expected. I've always had trouble with this story when it comes to keeping the chapter size down. Still, I think I succeeded.

This has been partially edited by **Morde24** and **Nad Destroyer**. By that I mean both of them were only able to go through the chapter partway before RL got in the way. I think that both of them will eventually get the fully checked/read through chapter back to me, but I am not willing to put off posting this chapter beyond the end of month it was intended for. **THIS MEANS THAT THE CHAPTER IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE**. Hopefully they will get it back to me soon. But if small mistakes bother you, I suggest you wait until this message is deleted.

### **Chapter 23: Egyptian Tours: Arrival**

Instead of heading directly to Egypt via their GPS, Harry decided to stopover and speak directly with Hermione in Barcelona. It was time to bring Hermione and Padma aboard, and he could also send out a message to the head of the ICW from there before continuing on to Egypt. Harry estimated it would take a little under an hour with his magic powering them forward as fast as possible. Because of that, Harry felt it was worth it not to have to deal with the Wizarding World's portkeys, especially since it would allow him to bypass anyone on that side of things that might want to track his movements. That, and international portkeys cost money, and Harry refused to be gouged like that.

When informed of this, Kiba and Loup were understanding, while Issei was ecstatic. "You mean I get to go to a city in Spain, the country of the samba and the language of love?! Ole!"

"... I think that you are mixing countries there," Harry chuckled, a sweatdrop appearing on his head before he reached out and roughly ruffled Issei's hair, noting the kid's attitude seemed just a bit forced for some reason. "And if you embarrass me in front of Hermione, do not think that your punishment will be anything less than humiliating."

"Would you mind if we slowed down and, I am uncertain about the terminology here, but could we ascend to the surface when we reach Gibraltar? I am a history buff, and both Gibraltar and Barcelona itself are historically important places. I'd even ask if we could make a brief stop in Malta, but I doubt that will be possible."

At Kiba's question, Harry nodded. "I'll slow us down and bring us above water, I won't let us go ashore, though," he warned, smirking slightly. "Gibraltar is known to have these little monkeys, and I promised I'd go there at one point with Lily. If she hears I went without her, I'll never hear the end of it."

"Wouldn't monkeys like, not like you at all, with your werewolf thing?" Issei asked in surprise.

"If they are used to being around people and dogs, no. We've been to zoos before, and the only animals that react to us are the wolves and the lions. Neither of whom like us much," Harry chuckled dryly.

Loup nodded, while Issei and Kiba, who hadn't seen wolves reacting to werewolves before, looked confused. Harry explained it, then asked Kiba to start directing him via the GPS. By that point, they were well away from Ireland, out into the Gulf of Biscaya. Another hour took them down around Portugal and into the Mediterranean.

True to his word, Harry allowed the ship to burst out of the water, allowing Kiba to gaze up at the massive rock of Gibraltar. The area in front of it showed a decent-sized town, but the town didn't go very far up the hill. Thanks to a conjured-up spyglass, Kiba could see a few ancient pillboxes and even a few old WW2 artillery guns.

"Oy, Kiba-senpai, let me have a go."

Bemused, Kiba handed the spyglass to Issei and then snatched it away as the pervert muttered, "Damn it, I thought Spain was supposed to have topless beaches!"

"Gibraltar's British territory, thank you very much," Tonks chortled, shaking her head. "Me country-blokes are kind of prudish about that in comparison to the rest of the enlightened world. By which I mean Europe."

"Oh. Well then, on to Barcelona and the topless beaches!" Issei shouted while Kiba and Loup hissed good-naturedly at her.

"I take it that things didn't go where you wanted them to with Tomoe and Tsubasa?" Loup asked.

Issei actually flushed a bit, looking away. "Er, not really. Tsubasa was willing to, um, dirty dance a bit, which was awesome. But neither was willing to let me look at their oppai."

"And that's the most important thing," Harry drawled.

"Of course!" Issei answered without any sign of irony, causing Tonks to break out in giggles.

Five minutes later, they were diving down once more, heading northeast around Spain's Mediterranean coastline.

But whereas Gibraltar from the sea was a bit of a letdown for Kiba, entering Barcelona was a treat even for Harry and Tonks, who had been there before. They came in from the same area used by cruise ships, where Harry and Tonks transfigured some clothing for them all. While Issei was muttering “topless beaches, topless beaches,” under his breath.

“Kiba, if you could?” Harry asked.

“Certainly,” Kiba reached out and clamped a hand on Issei’s back, then gestured him on. “Come on, Issei, there’s more to life than breasts.”

“Says you!” Issei grumbled.

“Issei, while I don’t mind you talking like this in front of us, please don’t do so in front of Hermione or Padma. Neither will take kindly to it and will probably reply with spellfire. Get it out of your system now,” Harry ordered, glaring into Issei’s eyes to make certain the boy knew he was serious. *And now I am wondering if I should have left him home. His spells are oddly useful, but...*

Gulping, Issei nodded, looking away, his mind going back to the same series of thoughts he’d been trying to avoid since getting on this boat. *I mean, I know there are more serious things to worry about, but after last night when Tomoe cockblocked me after Tsubasa got me going, and then both of them wanted to just talk and dance and swim and... well, okay, that was all fun, but, but not as much fun as oppai...right? Romance is, is only a means to an end, to the harem, right?*

“Oh, go on and let the kid go,” Tonks laughed. “Just remember, kiddo, on a topless beach, you have to take the good with the bad.”

“Awesome!”

Forty minutes later, it wasn’t as awesome, as Issei looked as if he was going to cry. “A, all that blubber. All those old people, aaagh, there oughtta be a law. I, I only saw one good pair, one!”

“Let this be a lesson, Issei,” Harry said, looping an arm around Issei. “Watching is never as fun as you think it is. And two birds in the hand are much better than birds on the wire, so to speak.”

He gave Issei a look from a few inches away, and Issei scowled, looking away. “Even, even if they are friends with your previous girlfriend? Even if they told you that you, um, you’d have to work for more than kissing? That it would be weeks before you could see their oppai?”

“Yes,” came from every throat, and Issei sighed, hangdog. “Yeah, that’s what I thought. This growing up shit is hard to do, though.”

“We’re not asking you to grow up all at once, kiddo. Be right hypocritical of me of all people to ask that. Just have some more self-control,” Tonks chuckled.

After that, Issei stopped trying to force himself to be more perverse than normal and actually started to look around Barcelona. With that, leading the way through the city became a treat for Harry. He had been here a few times before, but the city was still amazing. The different types of architecture, the different types of buildings and the Sagrada Familia in the distance drew them like most and even Kiba, who still had a low-key disdain for the Church, had to admit it was an amazing edifice.

As they traveled through the city, the massive and still unnamed dog garnered some looks. Its sheer size demanded attention from all passersby, but the dog seemed friendly enough, so no one cared overmuch as they moved through the city, heading in the direction of Hermione and Padma’s domicile. This was a two-story townhouse, which had a small, hidden backyard. An area Harry knew Hermione and Padma made no use of beyond occasionally sunbathing under Notice-Me-Not wards.

Indeed, the whole house was under a very mild Notice-Me-Not which Harry had to help the others through, although this wasn’t nearly as hard as it would have been if they were entering a segment of the Wizarding World. In Hermione’s words, “While I want access to the non-magical world, I already pay taxes to the British Ministry. I do not need to pay another set of taxes to the Spanish non-magical government. Thank you so much. Or be bothered by telemarketers, door-to-door salesmen, or those annoyingly large advertisement pamphlets you get on the holidays.”

Thus when they rang the doorbell like a regular non-magical would, Harry could almost sense the moment of confusion from within the house, and then a second later, he heard the pitter-patter of feet from inside. Hermione opened the door, looked at him, then seemed to Apparate the few short feet separating them, squeezing Harry in a viselike hug like she was trying to fuse his ribs together. “Harry! It’s good to see you. Although your timing is kind of funny. It makes today feel almost like old home week, frankly.”

Harry frowned at that, cocking an eyebrow at her. “Um... does that mean Ron’s visiting? Because if so, I don’t honestly know how us both being here will go...”

“Gah, no. Ron might not have consciously burned bridges with me as he did with you choosing to take Ginny’s side, but he’s never been that good about keeping in contact with me either. Face it, Harry, he and I were friends because we were both friends with you. That was honestly our only connection.” Hermione waved Harry’s worry aside, looking at his companions inquisitively, craning her neck up to look at Loup. “Good grief, you’re a tall one. And who are your companions?”

“Well, obviously, you know Tonks...”

“If she didn’t, I’d be right annoyed,” Tonks gave a thumb’s up to Hermione.

The Frizzy-haired magical researcher looked at the older woman quizzically, then around, her eyes narrowing a little. "Where's that Rias girl? I thought she was with you in London. You are still together, aren't you?"

"Still together, magically married," Harry laughed. "And I am very, very happy with it. As for Rias, some work came up back in Kuoh, and she had to head home early. I decided to send Lily back with her before heading down to Egypt, as I told Neville and the Wized Old Men crowd I would," Harry replied.

While she wondered about the use of the phrase magically married, Hermione looked at Harry's face and decided not to inquire. It was very obvious that Harry was indeed happy, and really, despite her objections to Rias's age, she couldn't deny it did her good to see Harry so happy.

"I take it this happened After that... issue... in Ireland was done with? The news is out that you had a hand in that, you know. You're back to being a hero in most people's minds," Hermione added dryly, then scowled. "And did you know I wanted to investigate Ireland a few weeks back, only for the Unspeakables to turn me away and threaten me with Obliviation? Honestly, every time I..." Hermione paused and then shook her head. "Getting off topic there, sorry. You were saying?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders. "I did send them back after we were done in Ireland, yes. I can tell you more about it if you're free to talk today. As for the powers that be in the Wizarding World setting me on a pedestal? I can't control what other people do.

"I have all day today to talk. Padma and I finished up our latest Arithmancy problem, and I was planning to spend the day with old friends anyway." Hermione shook her head again, looking at Issei, Kiba, Loup, and the giant bloody dog that made even Sirius in his 'Grim' form look like he was half-grown. "But you still haven't introduced your companions."

"Ah, sorry," Harry apologized quickly, going around the group. "These are Kiba, Loup, and dog at present. Lily tried to give him names, but he kept rejecting them."

Hermione cocked her head, staring at it as she cast a small spell on her eyes, letting her see magic. This was the the Wizard Sight spell, a necessary spell for any magical researcher that she had recently further enhanced. Yet now, it completely failed as had the similar spells Harry and Rias had attempted to discover anything about the dog. As Tiamat had said, the Curse within the dog prevented them from figuring out anything about the magic bound up within the dog.

Yet to Hermione, a magical researcher, that very lack of information was enough to tell her that the animal in question was not normal. "Nothing, absolutely nothing, it's like my Wizard Sight is letting me stare into a pool of deep oil. Odd. Yet physically, it seems to simply be crossed with an Irish Wolfhound, doesn't it? The predecessor of the Grim. Yet a Grim has a

noticeable magical signature, ergo, whatever magic is keeping me from seeing anything must come from the other half of its heritage.”

“You’d think so, but no, it isn’t. What the dog is, we still have no idea, although trust me when I say we ruled out far more varieties than you can possibly think of.”

Hermione blinked at that, then gestured them inside, her wand already falling into her hand from within a hidden wand holster on her arm. While the war had been years ago, Hermione had been one of the pureblood movement's primary targets at different points since then. “Still, would you mind if I perform some diagnostic spells?”

“Unless you’ve come up with brand-new ones that are better than the ones we already had access to, you won’t find anything, quite literally. But I know better than to try and talk you out of trying.” Harry shrugged while the dog, who seemed to have been following this, cocked his head to one side, his tongue lolling out in amusement.

“If my wife hadn’t completely forgotten manners, thanks to the new shiny toy you just waved in front of her face, she would’ve already allowed you all in and told you who else is visiting. I swear Hermione, are you certain that mishap with the potion in second year didn’t leave you with some catlike tendencies?” Padma interjected as she appeared behind Hermione, poking her wife in the shoulder.

She looked at Harry thoughtfully. “My cousin and Lavender are here, so I hope you didn’t think we could put you and your group up for the night.” Then a grin crossed her face. “And they brought along Parvati too. Thinking about it, the two fashionistas are going to go crazy about you, Kiba, was it?”

After nodding that Kiba was his name, he absentmindedly reached over and smacked Issei upside the head. “It’s rude to stare, Issei,” he said with a glare at him.

Issei gulped, shaking her head and looking away. While Hermione was good-looking, her frizzy hair and manner made her seem a bit of a mad scientist. Padma, on the other hand, while not her sister, always took care of her appearance. The Indian woman was currently dressed in a dark blue Sari with a bit of eyeliner and dark lipstick, emphasizing both her face and body to an amazing degree. *God damn, she might not have the oppai, but that’s all she doesn’t have.* “Um, S, sorry...”

“Nevermind,” Padma chuckled, gesturing them to come inside, while Hermione, ignoring her wife’s words, had already begun to cast detection spells at the dog. Getting nothing back at all. The Curse within the dog hid even the magic of Rias’ Knight piece that had bonded to the dog’s very being.

When she realized this, Hermione cocked her head to one side staring at the dog, who, even on his haunches, was at eye level with her. “That shouldn’t be possible. I should be getting some kind of information from those spells.”

Deciding to start the conversation now by taking the mickey out of his oldest friend, Harry gasped, then leaned in conspiratorially, whispering, "It's almost as if there are systems of magic other than the Wizarding sort."

Hermione blinked at that before her eyes narrowed, and she opened her mouth to launch into a series of questions. But a firm tug on her hair from Padma made Hermione remember her manners, and she helped Padma guide their guests inside, keeping her questions bottled up inside for the moment. Harry could almost see them piling up behind her eyes as she looked from Harry to Issei, Kiba and then the dog.

To one side of the foyer opposite the stairs was a small but well-appointed sitting room. No sooner had Harry crossed its threshold than he was greeted with a squeal of, "Harry! Damn, you are looking good! Not as good as my Rama, but still pretty darn good. And you, young man, could we interest you in a modeling job?"

Lavender hopped towards Harry, her arms outstretched in a hug. She was a medium-sized blonde woman, who, before interacting with the Devils Harry would've considered one of the most beautiful women he'd ever seen. He hadn't been all that close with her in Hogwarts, the two of them just hadn't really grown out of their teenage years in the same manner, but he knew her well enough. "Hello, Lavender," he said, hugging her once with her arms around his shoulders and backing away. He looked at the man with her, smiling. "And is this 'your Rama'?"

"Yep," Lavender announced proudly, grinning over at the tall man as she stood back from Harry. "Ramagupta Patil, my husband."

Ramagupta was a somewhat tall, spindly man with a well-cared-for black beard and frown and smile lines around his face despite not looking all that old. He dressed like he had just walked out of a movie set in ancient India. Black silk was wrapped around his body and he a dagger at his side. Harry knew from his time traveling around Europe that Indian wizards used daggers as their foci, and this one looked to be a particularly ornamental example of the breed, with gold and red filigree on the handle.

He was looking at Harry speculatively, tapping the dagger and his belt buckle with one hand before he bowed from the waist with both hands pressed together. "You are the famous Harry Potter. I must thank you for your defeat of Voldemort. If you had not killed that madman, I rather doubt I would have met the flower of my heart." As he spoke, the man's stern look faded into a look of tenderness that Harry had to smile at.

"Heh, I never did send you all a wedding present, did I?" Harry asked, looking at the two of them.

"Oh, Harry!" Lavender shook her head. "You know you don't have to do that."

"Oy, what am I, chopped liver?" Parvati grumbled, moving forward to get her own hug. Even as she did, though, the fashionista was somewhat startled internally by... well, Hermione

would have gagged if she used the term aura aloud, but that was what Parvati was feeling from Harry. A kind of, well, majesty and power. Parvati had to stop herself from kneeling the instant the door had opened even without seeing Harry, and she had noticed Padma, doing the same thing, while Ramagupta and Lavender had been frozen. Now they were all brushing it aside as if the moment hadn't happened, but Parvati could still tell something had changed within Harry. Something even more profound than becoming a werewolf, which was saying something, and something that she had seen recently too...

Once more, Kiba was forced to step in, pushing Issei's jaw back into place. *And he was doing so well as we walked through the city. Still, with twins here right in front of us, I can sort of see the appeal.* Kiba then shook his head, fiercely reminding himself he was already in a relationship. *You have Tsubaki, old boy, remember that.*

After everyone else settled down and began to introduce themselves, Hermione, her eyes narrowed, sat across from Harry and Tonks on a chair across from the sofa the two were currently sharing. "Multiple magical systems? You can't just let that drop and have me not react Harry Potter. So will you explain that little phrase, or will I have to break out the thumbscrews and iron rulers?"

Chuckling, Harry wondered about how to state this before the choice was taken from him by Tonks. "Hey, you know about how you wanted to sic me on Harry and Rias's relationship to figure out what the blooming heck was going on there? Well, it turns out there was a lot more to Rias than meet the eye. We wizards aren't alone in using magic!" the excitable Metamorph leaned forward as she began to explain the world that Harry and Lily had begun to interact with by meeting Sirzechs Lucifer.

Harry cut in at several points to help, but regardless, this wasn't an easy process. Nor was it fast. However, halfway through, Harry began to realize something. "I notice you are not nearly as surprised as you should be about these revelations, Hermione," he interjected, cutting off Tonks as she had just begun to explain about the Devils and Rias's place in their society.

"That you keep on getting involved in huge world-changing things, no. That is rather par for the course Harry, Mr. 'I made the werewolf curse my bitch and slew the most powerful Dark Lord in recent history before I hit my 20's', Potter" Hermione answered tartly.

"That is not what I am talking about." Harry cocked his head to one side, frowning at his old friend. "You already had hints about there being more magic in this world than just the wizarding sort."

Hermione hesitated, and Ramagupta spoke up from where he was sitting beside a suddenly tense Lavender while Padma and Parvati were watching all this with their own eyes narrowed. "That would, I am afraid, be because of me. Or rather, because of the Patil House and certain aspects of the magical side of India that Hermione discovered during the leadup to our wedding."



Cocking an eyebrow, Harry looked at him, then around at his other older friends. "I see. Am I right to assume the magicals in India been in contact with the mystical side, shall we say?"

"Indeed. Sometimes quite closely. Many of our older Brahmin or Kshatriya families, you would call them the Intellectual caste and the warrior caste, have low-key contact with the gods of Sanatana Dharma (the Eternal Way). It is all one way, and we much prefer it that way for reasons you no doubt can deduce," Ramagupta replied with a chuckle.

"The trouble it brings," Tonks laughed. "Yeah, I can see that. If the Onmyouji government can keep contact with the mystical side of things via a few families, I don't see why India wouldn't be able to either."

"And Italy too, although there the families are very few and far between," Padma interjected, while Parvati breathed a sigh of relief for some reason. "And don't let Ramagupta fool you. To the vast majority of India's magicals, and let me tell you, there's a lot more of us than most would believe, think the Gods of the Hindu pantheon don't actually exist. Many still pray to them, but they have no connection to them."

"That sounds awfully complicated," Kiba interjected, speaking up for the first time since he had to fend off Lavender and Parvati's attempts to convince him to work as a model.

"Not really. As Ramagupta said, the communication between the Families like the Patils which know of the gods is very much one-way. The gods can contact us. We can't do the same. And most of the time they do that is to bless harvests, congratulate a family on an auspicious wedding..." Here Parvati winked at her cousin and her best friend. "Or other small stuff. Occasionally, such as sending us an enchanted book or something similar. None of us youngsters knew about it at all until recently."

"Um, that sounds like the godly equivalent of, er, an old acquaintance sending you cards like 'remember me' or 'thinking of you'," Issei said slowly while Hermione tensed slightly, looking away from Harry.

"It is," Ramagupta chuckled. "Although it is a bit more serious in that in so doing, the Gods keep that line of communication open. And they have done some good too. When what you call the Youkai were being persecuted, the Gods stepped in, helping them subtly and ordering those families tied to them to do the same. In return, we had to send a few hundred tons of various potion reagents to a specific spot on what the Nonmagicals call the border between India and Nepal."

It went without saying that the various changes that India had gone through because of religious and social pressures on the non-magical side had not impacted the magical side much at all. A Wizarding World map didn't show Pakistan or Nepal as separate nations or even acknowledge their existence.

"And people don't talk about it?" Loup questioned disbelievingly.

“They can’t. I mean, we can’t,” Padma said. “If we try, the words just don’t come out. And if we try other means of communication, our own magic turns us into squibs. We can only talk about it around people who know about the secret of the Factions and everything else already.”

“But then, why does Hermione know about it?” Tonka asked. “And Lavender, come to think of it. Sorry luv, but if the Blacks had secrets like this, there’s no way someone marrying into the family would discover them.

Harry was already looking at his friend, one eyebrow rising in inquiry. “Hermione?”

Turning away and using her hair to hide her face, Hermione mumbled something under her breath. But Harry, who was now grinning, was having none of it and poked her knee demandingly. “Hermione, come on now, it’s obvious you have something to share with the class~,” he teased.

“I read a book I shouldn’t have, alright!?” Hermione shouted, turning back to Harry viper-quick.

While Harry and Tonks guffawed, Padma, chuckling a bit at her lover’s annoyance, explained further. “So here we are fully involved in Lavender’s wedding, choosing dresses and so forth. Hermione, being Hermione, was utterly uninterested in the whole process. So I sent her off to the family library. Little did I know she actually knew how to read the Old Tamil without the need for a translation spell. Even I can’t do that.”

“And one moment later, there is Lord Ganesha, standing in our library looking very, very confused,” Parvati giggled. “Oh, he was quite amused about it later, and very magnanimous but...”

"Oh, and you cannot imagine how appalled my sister and I were when he realized that we shared our names with goddesses who could just randomly pop over if the thought took them! That was possibly the most humbling and horrifying moment in my life!" Padma exclaimed to much laughter and rueful agreement from her sister. Both of them were still annoyed about that and had stern words with their parents for that. Honestly, naming kids after gods was bad enough. Doing it when you had reason to believe they might personally comment on it was worse.

Together, Padma, Parvati, and Rama explained how Ganesha had forced a vow on Hermione and then blessed Ramagupta and Lavender’s marriage. He did so by gifting them with a statue of himself, which could have been seen as egotistical by any mortal, but from the God of new beginnings and success (and the elephant-headed remover of obstacles), it was something else entirely.

“Actually, come to think of it, why are we all able to be so open about this. Even if Harry and his friends know about the wider magical world, we shouldn’t be able to speak about the Hindu Gods, should we?” Lavender interjected.

“Well, I was wondering the same thing until you mentioned Ganesha,” Harry looked at Ramagupta, a faint smile on his face. “I take it that you were given some commandments?”

While Kiba and Loup snickered at Harry’s joke and the others booed, Ramagupta simply nodded his head. “Indeed. I was asked if chance occurred that we met to pass on the means with which you could communicate with Lord Shiva.”

With that, the Indian man held out what looked like a flattened disk of crystal which Harry took into his hands, seeing that it was simply crystal, although Harry could see Deific magic bound up in its center. “Chance, hah! With a god involved?” Harry snorted, trying to feel out the magic within the crystal disc. But since it wasn’t based on the Tuathan type of magic, he could barely make out anything about it. It was a one-shot item and had something to do with transportation, but that was all. “And what is this exactly?”

“An open invitation for you to speak to Shiva and Parvati, his wife and the lady of beauty, almost as beautiful as my own,” he teased, causing Lavender to blush rosily while leaning into his side. “He doesn’t wish to jog your elbows, so to speak, but he does wish to speak to you in person soon.”

“Yeah,” Harry said slowly, staring at the simple-seeming crystal disk with the indented middle, while he could feel Hermione start to overcome her earlier embarrassment via the sheer number of questions building up in her mind. But, if time had taught Hermione anything, it was the value of patience, and she waited while Harry went on. “I am heading down to Egypt and will be looking into the issue down there, but after that, this will have my top priority. Do you have any idea what it could be about?”

“I am afraid not. I believe it could be about the various troubles impacting the mystical side of things, so to speak. I am afraid I could not tell you more. As we said before, while we know of the gods, we Hindi have always been very careful to keep the fiction that there are no other magical systems out there when dealing with the rest of the Wizarding World. It was felt ages ago that that was the way to wisdom.”

“I suppose that makes sense, although it’s not the kind of sense that I actually like.” Harry rolled his eyes. “Just think of how much progress using magic in new and different ways we could’ve been making if everyone wasn’t so determined to go their own way and ignore everyone else.”

“That’s what you’ve been doing, hasn’t it?” Hermione asked, making a leap of intuition rather than logic, having heard something in Harry’s tone. “You and that Rias, you’ve begun to mix different magical styles.”

“Yep,” Harry smirked, amused by how quickly his friend had grasped onto that aspect. From there, the discussion moved back to Harry and his own adventures, first from meeting Rias and falling in love – a story Parvati and Lavender lapped up, then moving on from there to her problems with another Devil, the issues with the Khaos Brigade, and everything else. By the time they were almost caught up, lunch had come and gone, and it was pushing evening, despite the fact they had arrived at around ten in the morning. Harry had attempted to keep it short, but with everything that had happened, that was next to impossible.

As they finished dinner, which was made of many different types of tapas, small sharable meals rather than a few larger ones, Harry had just finished explaining about the academy, at which point he smirked, looking at Hermione. “Speaking of the academy, Hermione, how would you like to be Chief Librarian?”

Hermione’s eyes widened, and her breath came out in gasps as a small flush appeared on her cheeks. Next to her, Padma laughed. “Harry, if you really want to never deal with the rumors that you and Hermione are a couple ever again, giving her Le Petite Mort with words alone is not the way to do it. I feel as if I should be jealous right now.”

Carefully ignoring the first portion of that statement and the fact that Hermione was now blushing while twitching in place, Harry addressed the last portion of what Padma had said. “Why? I was going to ask you to be her assistant and an assistant researcher for Tsubaki. And before you ask Hermione, I would’ve asked you to be head researcher, except you don’t really, er, lead well, I hate to tell you. You’re a magnificent organizer but not a good team leader.”

“As Head Librarian, I would be able to conduct my own experiments, however, correct? And have access to all of the books and everything else being brought in?” Hermione’s face was still flushed, and she had bitten her lip as she finished speaking. The look on her face was more than enough to cause Issei to blush and turn away, while Harry tried his best not to look at her.

Harry nodded. “Wouldn’t you have to be?”

At that, the two young women exchanged glances, then as one said, “We’re in.”

“Is it true that in Japan you have a lot of trouble with owl mail?” Parvati asked after exchanging a look with Lavender.

“Unfortunately, yes. It takes a while for owl mail to get to its recipient, and sometimes it just doesn’t. There are a few places where old wards have become so damaged and snarled they interfere with international mail, and the locals don’t use owls, so see no point in correcting it.”

“Then I’m afraid we can’t come with you. A lot of our business relies on owl mail delivery’s, and if we can’t send things off, let alone take new orders, we’re sunk. And we’ve already spread well beyond what Japan alone would be able to bring in for us,” Parvati smirked.

“We’re close to completely revolutionizing fashion in Magical India, France and Spain, and I am not giving that up.”

“We’ll need someone to look after the house and shut everything down there. That will involve some spellwork so that the house can reappear without the nonmagicals making a fuss,” Padma added, winking at Rama, indicating who she trusted to do that work, causing her sister to scowl back at her.

Then Hermione got things back on task, still flushed but recovering as she wagged a finger at Harry. “But you still have more to explain, mister.”

Laughing, Harry continued to explain everything he had been up to since leaving Britain. Now Harry and Tonks, who had been doing most of the talking, started to slow down. Hermione knew about the so-called Three Factions thanks to Ganesha and, it still made Harry smile to think about it, reading a book she shouldn't have. While Padma had apparently learned about the reality behind ancient tales about the Hindu Gods at the same time. But there were still some aspects of the magical side of things, what Fallen, Devils and even Sacred Gears could actually do, that threw both magical researchers for a loop. The phrase “that is not Arithmetically possible” was bandied about by both Hermione and Padma several times, and their questions began to multiply.

Telling them about what had happened since he arrived back in London made Hermione explode with anger at the self-serving greed Ginny, and even Molly had shown. Then she had spent several minutes examining Fragarach after Harry had handed it to her, trying to figure out any of the spells on it with her diagnostic spells, some of which Harry had never seen before, marking them as specialized spells. But just like the dog, she still wasn't having much luck, although at least in this case she could tell there were different magical spells and types on the thing rather than a big fat nothing.

Yet when they got to the bit about the ancient ritual centers, the fal stones and Harry and the others discovering they linked to Tir Na Nog, Padma shook her head while Hermione looked up from her work, her eyes narrowing. “That isn't the story that's in the news. The Ministry says that you destroyed an ancient ritual-type of magic that Riddle had started, which had begun to overload. How such a thing is possible they are deliberately vague about, only hinting at vampires being involved, as well as traitors among the Unspeakables.”

Harry blinked at that, although he discounted the last bit. That was obviously the first step in Shackbolt's campaign to try and remove the Unspeakables. No government could afford to have a portion of their government willing to flout direct orders and even attack duly recognized authorities.

In response to his confused look, Lavender hopped out of her seat, racing over to a small stand by the doorway, grabbing up a copy of the *Daily Prophet*, tossing it into Harry's lap before setting into Rama's, smiling as his arms went around her. *They make a cute couple,*

Harry reflected as he opened the newspaper. *Although I wouldn't have thought Rama was nearly as pretty as I had expected a husband of Lavender's to be.*

"You still read this rag?" Harry teased as he looked down at the paper.

"Bah, it's still the only newspaper in Britain, and at least it sometimes hints at real events, which is somewhat better than relying on the rumor mill alone," Hermione grumped. "It also tells me what the Ministry wants us to know, which in itself isn't without merit, even with Shacklebolt in charge."

The story was deliberately vague, Harry could tell, containing no details, although it did hint at a conspiracy among the Unspeakables. The only other details, to use the term loosely, that the story mentioned was that a coven of vampires had been involved, Fae magic and hints of blood rituals. There was nothing else in it, and Harry reflected that this story made Skeeter's worst look like it was worthy of the Pulitzer Prize. But it got across the main idea: that the problem in Ireland had been endangering the Statute of Secrecy had been solved. *And I suppose the common sheep of the Wizarding World won't care about anything else.*

Yet even as he thought that, Harry reflected that it wasn't anything unusual. People everywhere preferred stability over uncertainty. *And in this case, I have to approve.* "I suppose the truth wouldn't do the people much good anyway. Even if they would believe the truth in the first place."

"Fine, fine whatever, let's get back to what really happened," Hermione said, practically growling with impatience. "Now, you had just said that you and the others had figured out a way to activate the dimensional portal. And we **will** come back to the idea of the Hallows being the godly equivalent of a Horcrux in the future, Harry. But for now, tell us more about what happened on the other side? What did you find?"

"A place of wonder," Kiba said with a dark chuckle. "And like all life, it had its own darkness too."

"Too true," Harry chuckled in turn, although he noted Kiba's slightly bitter edge to his tone and realized that the Knight was still annoyed that he hadn't been along on that trip, which had amounted to a small war. Well, *when we get to Egypt, I have no doubt he'll have his fill of battles.* Harry thought, frowning as he thought about Egypt. The fact that the problems there were spread so far across the entire country still worried him even now after his recent powerup. And frankly, to his mind, the issues in Egypt were actually more concerning than the ones in Ireland had been.

Shaking his head, Harry returned to the here and now, describing the campaign against the winter Fae with the help of Tonks and Loup. Hermione's interest in the dog was renewed at this point, and she and Padma walked around it, causing the dog to huff in amusement, smacking its tail against them a few times, deliberately Harry felt, as they attempted to

decipher what he was. But like Harry and Rias, neither could discover anything more than Tiamat had told Harry. Whatever had been done to the dog, the God-created Curse was completely hiding it from the view of any other magical being.

However, both magical researchers' attention was drawn instantly back to Harry when he mentioned how he had been able to transport some of the Fal stones and still activate the dimensional enchantment.

"That's impossible," Padma said bluntly, with Hermione scowling, muttering numbers under her breath. "That goes against one of the most basic rules of magic! If you start to create a ritual, you can't then move portions of the runic array involved! Moving anything like these Fal stones will disrupt the entire ritual array! Every test we've ever seen, every ritual we've researched, says that is just flat out impossible!"

"Blame it on the majority of the ritual coming from the Tuatha De Danan," Harry replied dryly. "That, and I think that the Tuathans had quite a bit of tricks in that area. I wouldn't be able to re-create it, I don't think, not without a lot of time and research. but I can certainly make use of it."

"Prove it," Lavender interjected. She had been silent for most of the story, although her husband had asked a few extremely insightful questions about the various battles that Harry had fought, showing some Kshatriya heritage. It was evident that while he wasn't an Auror or the Indian equivalent, he knew the steps to that particular dance.

The others now looked at Lavender in question, and she grinned, hopping to her feet once more and moving towards Harry. "Come on, Harry, you didn't really expect us to just believe you if you can teleport directly back to wherever this is without demanding a ride, right?"

"Now, wait a minute," Harry protested. "Everyone else who knows about Danan is hidden under the most powerful wards and magical defenses we can contrive. None of you are, and before you say anything, Hermione, I know the wards here are good, I helped put them up, but they lack the power to stop someone from the Three Factions or the Khaos Brigade. If I'm going to show you Danan, then I will need some kind of Magical Vow to ensure that you will not be sharing the secret."

Hermione and Padma agreed to this instantly, while Lavender was slightly hesitant before nodding her head. Parvati and Rama, though, did not agree until they heard the Vow's contents. They weren't willing to be held to an oath that could hurt their family down the line or put them on the bad side of the lords of the Sanatana Dharma.

When it was, Tonks and Harry stood forward, across from the two twins, ignoring the fact that Issei was staring between the twins, shaking his head and smacking himself in the forehead so fast that it sounded almost like a woodpecker for a second there.

"I, Padma/Parvati Patil do swear to keep Harry Potter's secrets unless one of the Lords of the Eternal Way demand them of me in person, so I swear, so mote it be."

With the Vow given, even if someone used a mental attack to try and take the information from one of the oath takers, their very magic would react. Issei, who had been confused about the Vow, asked what would happen under such circumstances, and Hermione explained. "Think of it as a subconscious twitch, done because you hear a noise. That will be the magical reaction," she explained. "The greater the attack, the greater the response. It will even hold under an Imperio, although the impact to the individual in such a circumstance will be very extreme."

"How extreme are we talking about?" Issei asked. He'd heard about the Imperio spell, as well as the other two Unforgivables. Unlike born devils and Youkai, he didn't have any kind of religious reason to make the idea of destroying a soul seem to be worse than, say, cutting off someone's head, but he could understand why a spell like Crucio was unforgivable. And as for Imperio? *Damn, it's kind of horrifying with something like that to do in the hands of, well, a pervert.*

Issei knew he was a pervert; indeed, he was an unrepentant one. Issei worshiped every day at the altar of holy oppai and believe that the female form was one of the finest things to ever be created. Yet there was a difference between that and forcing himself on someone, which you could do with Imperio all too easily. Indeed, you could even make them think it was their own idea or just enjoy what you were doing to them, and that horrified Issei.

"Burning out the parts of the brain that holds the secret, or simply Obliviating the vower's mind," Hermione counted off on her fingers, causing Issei to pale, although he became even more so as she went on. "Creating a magical backlash against the individual so attempting to steal the secret, connecting the victim's magical core to that of the attacker and burning them both out. Those are all events recorded when someone attempted to steal a secret held under a Magical Vow. Vows are extremely serious, that's why most people simply prefer to not give them, not know secrets that would call for such things, or use mental defenses instead."

"And why the Unspeakables were so dead set on obeying all of the Oaths they were under," Harry interjected.

"Unfortunately, Occlumency is a very difficult magical discipline, and you have to have the right mind for it," Padma gestured to her sister and Lavender, neither of whom looked sheepish at being called out like that.

"But wait, what's to stop say Kiba or me or Loup from being mentally probed..." Issei began.

"Why did you make that sound so dirty?" Harry quipped, ruffling the youngster's hair. Regardless of his obsession, Issei had a pretty good mind that showed itself sometimes, and he



was improving. That was about all that Harry could hope for. "But as for you Devils? Rias and I experimented with this and discovered that you all have a small natural defense. No one could get into your mind without you knowing it was happening."

"But that's a hell of a long way from defending against such a thing." Issei shook his head. "Should I take the oath too? I mean I know I'm the weakling here."

"It speaks well of you that you are willing to step forward like that young man," Rama smiled as he spoke before holding out his hand to Tonks. He, too, had admitted that his mental defenses were not very good. Like the Devils, he could tell if someone attempted to use Legilimens on him, but Rama could not stop such an assault.

Harry looked at Issei closely. "If you're sure?"

"I think we both should. I know Loup as a werewolf will not be very easily..." Kiba paused, then smirked as he used the same term Issei had, "Probed. But Issei and I are vulnerable to mental attacks. Knowing that we are being attacked is not the same as being defended. And if we will be working with wizards, and we assume that whoever is involved in Egypt has access to wizard-style magic, we should be defended against Legilimency if nothing else."

Soon the two Devils had also taken a magical vow, the bands of magic showing the vow's power during the swearing black for both of them rather than the glowing white it had been for the Witches and Wizard. Once they were finished, Lavender bounced up to Harry, dragging her husband out of his chair, her eyes gleaming. "Well, what are you waiting for! Let's see this fairyland!"

Harry laughed, then asked Hermione to lead him to their garden. There, he pulled the Fal Stone out of his moleskin pouch, setting the stone on the ground, embedding it as he had done previously with the one in Kuoh. As he did so, both Padma and Hermione were writing down the runes they saw on the stone. They chattered among themselves about parallels with Norse and Greek runes, whether or not the array's language was anything similar to anything they already knew. In particular, they commented on how most of the symbols looked almost like different types of trees, twisted this way and that.

When the portal opened, and Harry gestured everyone through, both researchers quickly joined the group as they traveled it to Danan. They found themselves on what Rias and Harry had decided to call the island of Fand, in honor of the goddess whose enneagram had told them of its importance and blessed Rias and Yasaka. While Parvati and Lavender gasped in delight at the sheer beauty of the area, the others were awed by the feel of it, the overriding sense of happiness and joy here.

Hermione shook her head, looking over at Rama. "This feeling, it's almost the same feeling I got when Ganesha gave you and Lavender that statue of him. Only far less contained."

"Indeed. Even as magic users, you see why those among my family who know the secret still revere the gods. What they can do through their might and mind often makes what we can do seem pale imitations at best," The Indian man replied, smiling in the light at the river. Like every other Hindu, he revered River Ganges and had indeed been raised in a small community directly on the river, so any flowing water was always a delight for him.

There was no one else on the island to greet them at present, despite it being near to eight o'clock here. Yubelluna, Kalawarner, and Akeno were the only ones from Kuoh who had stayed in Danan, and all of them were on Tir Na Nog working on various projects. Harry sent up a grateful pray for that, even as he began to lead the way up the river to the small series of houses Harry had created from his first controlled Blessing. Harry had been very careful not to mention the fact that he was in a harem now, but he knew that that secret would come out the instant that Hermione saw him around any of his ladies.

Even now, he could see the need to speak up about his harem building up behind Tonks and, to a certain extent Issei's, eyes, but neither had brought it up just yet, waiting for just the right moment. *Gah, this is like knowing a guillotine is just above your head, not being able to do anything but watch it slowly come closer to cutting your head off.*

"And you say that you can somehow set the time differential between here and Earth? That could be... Well, it could be world-changing," Rama muttered, staring around him.

Hermione nodded from nearby, as did Padma, although both of them were just a little more in awe of the island than Rama. "By the blessed Shakti, this place is amazing! Not only is it more tropical than Barcelona, but the feeling of goodness in the air is awe-inspiring."

While Hermione just nodded again, Parvati agreed volubly with her sister, then looked to the side as Issei stepped around the two magical researchers to stand beside her, gesturing around them grandly. "Would you like me to give you a tour, milady?" He asked, smiling brightly.

Parvati looked at the young teen, then shook her head, a faint smile on her face even as she turned Issei down flat. "I'm out of your league and age group, kid."

Instead of being put down or embarrassed at being called out like that, Issei simply continued to smile, shooting back with, "Age ain't nothing but a number, time ain't nothing but a thing. Especially considering that I'm a devil, and you are a Witch. What does the difference of a few years make to us?"

That caused Parvati to laugh. "Nice comeback, but still no." While age really didn't matter, Issei was right about that. Heck, she had heard about witches in their seventies still looking like they were in their thirties and taking lovers that age. But experience was important. Issei was nice, and Parvati could tell that he would grow up to be kind of handsome, but he

didn't have the adult experience she looked for in a lover. **{Not certain I like the adult experience thing}**

The dog ran off, and Harry let him. The dog was, despite his intelligence, an animal that was quite used to having a lot of room to roam. And he hadn't had that today.

After showing the quartet of newcomers around for about twenty minutes, Hermione decided that they had seen enough here. "You said that Luna is on Tir Na Nog? As the fairy Queen?" Hermione shook her head at the idea. Although frankly, not because she didn't believe there was a connection between Luna and the Fae. No, it was the idea of Luna in any kind of position of authority that did not compute. "Let's go see her then.."

"Really, you don't want to just stay here for that or go straight through to Kuoh to meet Tsubaki and Sona? It is kind of late after all," Harry opined, hoping to buy time. In Kuoh, he could just drop Hermione and Luna off and let Rias or Yasaka do the big reveal of the whole harem thing. It wouldn't save him from Hermione's reaction, but it certainly would put it off for a while.

"Whatever else, Hermione and I will be staying here to use that time dilation to get a few things done. We still have obligations to our current employers after all," Padma answered for her lover. As magical researchers, the two took commissions from other people who wanted to create specific spells or who wanted something enchanted.

*Well fuck, there goes that idea*, Harry grumbled internally before nodding, gesturing them all to come close save the dog, which they would leave here for now. A moment later, they were standing on the same stone that Harry had used previously, the one overlooking the cliff, and he smiled slightly at Hermione's exclamation of, "Good grief, they really do look like the cliffs of Dover!"

They turned as dozens of little voices greeted them. "Hello, Lord Potter, lord Potter and friends!" Several fairies came towards them from the woods, hovering over Lavender, exclaiming at her hair color, which delighted them, while buzzing around the three Indians. "Skin color, I've never seen the like, have you sisters?" Was the one phrase that Harry could make out among that group.

"Ladies, these are some friends of ours who are also friends with your new queen. Could you tell me where Luna is?"

"We will show you!" Said one of the fairies, one with dark blue hair. "The queen said for us to be on the lookout just in case someone else came by." With that, the fairies rose in a cloud above them, waiting for Harry to follow.

Kiba took to the air with his own wings, while everyone else, even Issei, since he lacked experience flying under his own power, had to wait for Harry to hit them all with hovering and

Accio charms. Soon, they were coming down on the sight of the Summer Court's former capital, and Harry shakes his head in chagrin at seeing Yubelluna there, using her violin to accompany several Fae in song, her eyes glowing bright green as she used her bandrui powers.

Under their attention, trees were slowly growing from the ground. All around the tiny hilltop, Harry saw a few dozen branches he felt had to have been taken from the giant tree. Currently, four of them were growing, branching out towards one another, winding around one another before continuing to grow.

From where she had been sitting at a long, flat stone with several bundles of parchment in front of her, Luna looked up at them, then smiled brightly, leaping like a kangaroo towards Hermione, and clasping her in a quick hug the instant that Hermione's grateful feet touched down. "There she is, it's about time you arrived, Hermione! I dub you my Chief Magistrate! You will help me deal with all of the various groups here, and in particular, handle any contracts or paperwork that the leprechauns and dwarves try to foist on me! Only a day of this, and I'm already overwhelmed."

"Hello to you too, Luna," Hermione answered dryly, hugging the other girl back for a second, before turning to smile at her husband, who had just leaped down from another completely non-magical tree, his wand in one hand, and some kind of implement in the other. "Hello Rolf, has Luna driven you insane yet?"

"With magic, insanity and wonderful things sometimes go hand in hand," Rolf replied complacently.

"What are you working on here?" Padma asked, watching the little... she wasn't certain if it was a ritual or a song, frankly. *Song-based magic? That does fit with some of the things that Harry told them about, although I couldn't even try to understand it. I can't hold a tune to save my life.*

"We're trying to create a new center for the Summer Court," Luna supplied, moving over to hug her fellow former Ravenclaw. "We don't need it to be as large as it was back in the day, and we only need a few large people type homes. The dwarves have agreed to make those and one of their own for us. So these trees are going to create the homes for the fairies and a few public places along with a roost for a few griffins, and other stuff."

Rama moved over to Harry, whispering, "you do realize that I will tell Lord Ganesha or whoever is doing the asking about all of this, yes? An entirely new dimension and the Fae being alive is too important a matter to hide."

"And how do you think they'll react?" Rama didn't answer, and Harry went on after a moment. "I think that the majority of your God will see it as an excellent reason all on its own to treat me as an equal, or at least see an alliance with me in a good light. Either way is fine by

me. All I want to make certain of is that you don't volunteer that information before being asked and that it is safe from others."

He chuckled ruefully. "I'm still not certain if what they have to say is going to be on the Khaos Brigade or something else entirely, but I'm certainly willing to meet with Shiva. I just can't do so now before checking into whatever is going on in Egypt. Not if we all want to keep magic from coming out in the open."

As Rama nodded, Yubelluna was coming out of her trance. Her eyes slowly lost their eldritch glow, returning to their normal purple color. Setting down her violin, she worked out the fingers that had been holding her bow, unaware of her surroundings.

Harry couldn't stop himself. He moved towards her, and as she seemed to become dizzy from the amount of power she'd just been conducting, Harry caught her from behind. "Are you well, my lady?"

Hearing that, and the quickly becoming familiar feel of Harry's arms around her waist, Yubelluna smiled tenderly, turning slightly in his arms to give him a kiss on the cheek, leaning against his shoulder, not questioning his presence, just glad for his support. "That took a lot out of me, and it was the second bandrui type ritual we've done today," she confessed. "We first had to cleanse those tree branches of the darkness within them before bringing them here. Then trying to control how they're growing as well as accelerating that growth, was hard." She mock-glared over at her fellow musicians. "Especially when you people keep on changing what shape you wanted them in!"

Hermione had washed all this, and now she moved over to Harry, her eyes narrowed. "Harry, who is this?" she questioned in a deceptively mild tone of voice.

Twitching, Harry turned towards her, but before he could say anything, Issei blurted out, "That's Yubelluna, she's Harry's latest harem woman! Honestly, leave some for the rest of us, man!"

While Tonks began to laugh, Kiba and Loup stepping stepped back, and Harry winced. "I still prefer the term nontraditional relationship, thank you."

"Harry James Potter!" Hermione's bellow sent the fairies racing in every direction. As Luna shook her head to get rid of the ringing in her ears, Hermione stalked towards Harry, her eyes flashing in awakened feminine fury, a power which made even Harry, who wielded the magical strength of a powerful god, quail.

What followed was not pleasant for Harry. Much smacking and screaming were involved until Harry convinced Hermione that A: he was an adult and could control his own affairs, B: he had long since stopped caring about societal conventions and thus wouldn't care about what people said about him or his ladies, and C: both he and all the ladies involved were all happy

with the arrangement, and that Harry continued to treat them all as individuals, something he had actually been getting better at as the relationships evolved.

It took Yubelluna's assistance to calm Hermione down. But when Yubelluna, who confessed to not having gone all the way with Harry, confessed to being fully on board with the idea of joining the nontraditional relationship, Hermione had to let go of her anger.

Indeed, she did so faster than Harry had expected, and he was still looking quizzical at that as she moved off to talk to Luna some more. At that point, Rama moved up behind him, then coughed delicately. "Harems are still a thing among some Brahmin families. Hermione met a few ladies from one of them at the wedding. Your relationship seems far happier than the ones she met in all honesty and far more equal. You are shining in comparison."

Harry nodded at that and watched as Hermione and Padma agreed to help Luna for a time since they wanted to stay in Danan anyway. Considering the resources here on Tir Na Nog, Harry left them to it, heading out to check in with Kalawarner. He found her and Akeno both hard at work. Kalawarner was hammering away at the forge, and Akeno was working several of the dwarves and leprechauns, going over runes and various designs.

Harry stood in the doorway watching Kalawarner work for a time, hammering on what looked like a hooked dagger on a bronze anvil of all things, as one of the gryphons leaned into a window, watching the proceedings with interest. Since Kalawarner was so busy, he didn't interrupt her, not even announcing his presence. He and Akeno spent a little longer together, but even she confessed to wanting to finish some work before turning in for the night. "I am sorry, my love, but these dwarves are extremely stern taskmasters, but I think between us, we will make marvels!"

"In that case, I will see you later, Akeno," Harry said to her, and Akeno flushed and giggled happily at the amount of passion Harry had put in those words. After all, it was already nighttime in Barcelona, and Harry saw no reason to spend the night in the city.

With that promise given, Harry returned to the site of the former Summer Fae's capital, the name of which Luna and the Summer Fae were hotly contesting at the moment. The fairies didn't see the point in naming at all. To them, it had simply been the Summer Court, the main implying both what it was and who stayed there. But to Luna, that was not acceptable. She wanted to name it Sunshine City, Or Daisy Town.

None of the men were involved in this discussion, and the two dwarves there were looking more and more pained as it went on.

Yubelluna was still there and greeted Harry with a smile, which he returned before stepping into her arms and giving her a long, languid kiss.

From nearby, Hermione watched this, shaking her head. "Harry's really changed quite a bit. There was a time when he wouldn't have been so open with his affections in public. Hugging yes, he did that with Lily all the time, but kissing? Showing so much affection in public?"

"Yet Harry's core is still the same. He still loves his family. He is still willing to help people and is still a reluctant yet extremely competent leader. That's enough for me," Luna replied.

Humming thoughtfully, Hermione nodded. "Me too, I think. So long as I don't have to go into battle alongside him again. I had enough of war and death to last a lifetime in the war against Riddle."

"I too believe that I have seen enough fighting both in that war and in the war against the Winter Court here. But for Harry, the battles have barely begun," Luna announced sadly.

Hermione winced, not needing to turn her head to look at the other woman to know that her eyes would currently be glowing with all the colors of the rainbow. She really didn't need a prophet to know that more violence was Harry's future.

The entire group headed back to Barcelona for a bit, where Hermione and Padma packed up their belongings in several large trunks. This took several hours, by which time it was deep night. Harry and his group stayed the night on the island of Fand for the night, and Harry spent time with Akeno and Kala, glad for some more downtime before tackling the next problem.

**OOOOOOO**

While Harry and the others were spending the night in Danan, in Cairo, a certain black cat was now thoroughly annoyed with her own equivalent investigation. After convincing Ophis that doing so might lead to either a powerful ally or more intelligence, Kuroka, Titi Varai, and a team of magicians were sent into Egypt to look into the various rumors about the strange magic and things going on there.

Vali and Cao-Cao had oddly enough agreed, for once, that it was necessary. That was becoming more and more unusual as their two factions were basically locked in a cold war within the Khaos Brigade that needed to be looked into. The wizards were doing a great job of covering whatever it was up, as usual, but there was something going on that seemed beyond the purview of the Wizarding World even if it had started there.

The team had been in Cairo for a few days now and had already begun to find signs of magic here and there, but nothing that they could really trace back to any one source. And then yesterday, Titi had disappeared. She had been brought along as a local expert on the Wizarding World side of things, being the only one able to get past the WW's powerful aversion and

Notice-Me-Not wards. Not even someone like Kuroka, with her various magic and chakra abilities, could do that. Titi had been heading to Alexandria that day, but she was supposed to return after only a few hours.

Still, Kuroka thought that Titi was a big girl and hadn't searched for her. But now, it was pushing midnight, and Titi still hadn't appeared. Beyond that, there was also something else about Titi bothering Kuroka. It had taken a while, but Kuroka felt that now she was beginning to feel out the other woman's real emotions, beyond the veneer of amusement and hatred towards the Wizarding World that Titi always portrayed.

Thanks to her Senjutsu abilities, Kuroka was able to feel the emotions of most of those around her. Only a few had enough self-control and mental defenses to able them to be complete blanks to her, Ophis being one of them, Cao-Cao another. And before spending so much time in her presence, Kuroka hadn't even thought that Titi was hiding anything. But after several days in the woman's company, her Senjutsu skills had finally begun to allow Kuroka to see past what the woman wanted her to feel.

And what Kuroka had seen the night before Titi disappeared was startling. A level of hatred, envy, and overwhelming ambition that was startling in its power. Now coupled with her disappearance, Kuroka wondered if the woman was even any kind of ally at all. *Then again, why am I surprised by that? Everyone in the Khaos Brigade has their own agenda these days.* So she had ordered the rest of their team to continue their investigations on their own while she hunted their wayward fellow.

In her black cat form, Kuroka hopped from one rooftop to another, heading away from the tourist segments of Cairo and deeper into the outskirts of the city, where modern met ancient in a riot of colors and building types, and all of the crumbling, in disrepair, and heavily populated. As she leaped away from a few kids hanging out on a rooftop, Kuroka reflected, *And I thought China was crowded! And it is, but at least most of the cities there are organized in some way.* Here that wasn't the case, and here in Cairo, not only was there no organization, but there was so much squalor and decay. It was like the whole city was falling apart.

Two hours and three attempts to capture by the locals later, Kuroka was getting more annoyed. *It's nighttime, humans, go to freaking sleep! And leave the cute black cat alone.* "And you brat, I heard what you wanted to do to my tail. I'll be back later to 'speak' to you, nyaa," she grumbled under her breath.

The change was so subtle that even Kuroka, with all her skills at magic and Senjutsu, barely felt it. But she did, and the black cat which had been trundling along a rope between two three-story adobe houses stopped, staring around her.

Leaping the remaining way across, Kuroka's eyes began to glow, and her tail lashed violently. An interrogative noise came from her throat, then she hissed and leaped from the



roof down onto a rotting crate, and then from there up on to a second-story rooftop to the left of the route she had been following, clearing a distance that no normal cat could have.

Once her paws touched down, Kuroka abruptly changed forms, diving out of the way of a spell of some kind. It was dark black with green striations through it. A second later, Kuroka stood up in her normal black kimono, leaning down slightly into a forward crouch, her breasts swaying with the movement as she took in the form of the two dozen people standing on the surrounding rooftops.

They seemed to be spread out in fireteams of three. All of them wore dark black robes that blended into the darkness all around them, absorbing the light of the fires and few scattered electrical lights of the city around them, the lack of public lighting working for them as it had for Kuroka.

Normally Kuroka would have used this stance more to tease someone than anyone else. But right now, she was leaning forward into a combat crouch because she was very worried. *I didn't sense my attackers right up until the bounded field went up! Something is blocking my Senjutsu senses. I didn't think that was possible.*

All around Kuroka, her attackers finally began to launch spells, fireballs, wizard-style cutting spells, streams of dark black energy. But in this form, Kuroka could use all of her magic rather than only a few spells, and she blocked them easily, smacking them aside as if they were no moment. Because to Kuroka, they were.

Even before she had turned rogue, Kuroka had been reckoned a magical prodigy with the power of two bishops within her. She had become even stronger since mastering Senjutsu and her overall magic to an incredible degree. She had even learned many Wizard-type spells, although she wasn't as good at remembering to use them. After all, she had access to better combat spells than that.

A second after blocking that first deluge of spells lashed out. First, a prayer wheel appeared behind her made of fire, then thin trails of fire about the same width as Kuroka's fist stabbed out from her fire construct. Pinpoint accurate these flames were so hot they seared heads or chests into ash.

Her attackers didn't scream or cry out, they just fell far too easily, and Kuroka scowled. "Gah, remember Kuroka-chan, you want to capture one alive, nyaa."

Kuroka charged towards one group of three as she slaughtered two more, her hands outstretched in either direction directing a series of cutting spells as she raced forward. She then teleported between one step and the next, so fast and so abruptly that even the most experienced attacker might've been taken aback. The next instant Kuroka appeared within the trio of attackers, fists and foot lashing out with deceptively gentle taps, to necks and backs, knocking all three into unconsciousness.

She was about to kneel over them when the entire roof exploded underneath her. Kuroka felt the tremble occurring in her feet, and by the time the explosion actually occurred, she was gone, teleporting to a nearby rooftop.

There, Kuroka found herself alighting down lightly, only for several wards to go up all around her. Kuroka had spent enough time around the wizards that had been recruited into the Khaos Brigade to recognize these as wizard style, and she lashed out with the full power of her magic, disdaining subtlety. She didn't know how they worked, but she knew enough magic could overwhelm them. *No wards thrown up like this for a single battle in a bounded field would be powerful enough to overcome my strength, nyaa.*

The wards directly around her did go down, but Kuroka was astonished that another ward went up all around her just at the edge of her sight, which, in the dark, was a pretty decent distance. Yet even from here, she could feel it, like a dome of energy. "What is that, nyaa?"

As she hopped from the roof to another, Kuroka went to teleport towards it, only to flail suddenly, as her teleportation failed! Not just failed but was completely blocked. *How! That shouldn't be possible. A ward to stop me from teleporting?* Kuroka thought as she twisted in midair, landing lithely on her feet in a dirty, extremely dilapidated area between two houses. Even calling it an alleyway was too generous.

Kuroka was a magic expert and knew that her own teleportation method, which was more accurately labeled spatial manipulation magic, was almost entirely unique. Only herself, and a powerful being like Ophis, or a God perhaps, should have been able to use it. And to block it, that should have been impossible entirely, save by someone who had the power to burn like a God could do that kind of thing.

But then, Kuroka shook herself, her Senjutsu powers coming to her aid, allowing Kuroka to see the reality around her. *I, I actually have teleported!?*

She had indeed teleported, but to Kuroka's senses, it had appeared for a bit as if she hadn't. The black-haired woman snarled, or incisors showing, as she cracked her neck and shoulders, loosening her hands, the equivalent of a magic-user cocking a twelve-gauge shotgun. "Well, someone wants to play cat and mouse? They really should recall the story of the man who caught a tiger by the tail, nyaa!"

With that, she closed her eyes for a moment, bringing two fingers up to her forehead, then open to them. Her eyes glowed orange as she called upon her full Senjutsu powers, shattering the illusion. There was no accompanying cry of pain as she had thought there might be when a spell that extensive was broken, but she could see the world now as it really was without straining her Senjutsu senses.

Because of this, Kuroka once more saw she was surrounded by several dozen attackers. Although these attackers were at least more individualistic than the previous attackers. Some of them were human, clad in what looks like ancient Egyptian garments, complete with holding crooks in their hands. Although, a dozen more looked almost like something else entirely: Ottoman Janissaries, complete with armor and helmets. Although most Janissaries wouldn't be green or have visible death wounds visible on their bodies.

“Great, nyaa. Undead. I will never get the stink out of my clothing!” *Although at least this means whoever is attacking me is probably linked to the local troubles, Nyaa!*

Behind these more direct attackers stood several others who appeared to be working on a single spell, a giant ball of building some kind of energy within their midst.

Whatever it was, Kuroka decided that she didn't want to play with it. With that thought, she teleported straight towards them, bypassing the inner ring of the attackers even as they attacked her with spellwork and musket-fire from the Janissaries.

Several illusions of Kuroka broke off as she teleported, appearing elsewhere in the battlefield, so real that they even seemed to do damage on their own like she had just used some kind of duplication spell on herself. They weren't actually real, but if you couldn't see through them, then your own mind would almost do the damage they did. Unless you were undead, of course. Undead didn't have a mind to fool.

A fist lashed out, catching one of the magic users on the chin, hurling her away, as fire erupted from Kuroka's other hand, scorching the other two fiery magic users into ash and continuing on to burning a few of the undead to ash.

The spell they had been working on went out with a blink of compressed air, ruffling Kuroka's clothing, and she turned, watching the mess her doppelgängers were making among her living attackers, as she instead flowed into another allusion spell of her own, completely disappearing from all normal senses. Kuroka intended to sneak up onto one of the crook-wielding magic users, believing one of them would be the one in charge.

However, a second later, she gasped as a spear was flung through several buildings straight towards her current position. *How did they sense me!?* It was only luck and her Senjutsu-given speed that allowed her to dodge it just enough to avoid what would have been a crippling blow at best. Instead, the spear tore along her thigh, slicing deeply in a welter of blood, causing Kuroka to stumble and for her spells to end.

As the spear continued on its way, Kuroka had a split second to recognize it. Like many Devils and others, Kuroka had made a study of ancient tales and fables, and that one spear was predominant in Irish mythology: the Heart Seeker, Gae Bolg. "How!?" She hissed, her hands squeezing her thigh, even as the wound began to close once more thanks to another aspect of her Senjutsu powers.

Yet while she had dodged it, the wound had cost her, and Kuroka was now fully on the back foot, wondering where the hell the spear had come from while the surviving attacker turned on her. Seeing the spells coming towards her, Kuroka dipped down towards another rooftop below her, disappearing behind some other two-story buildings for a time.

Two of her attackers tried to get in her way, both wielding scimitars rather than magic and wearing ancient-looking bronze armor. But Kuroka disdained using her magic on such, concentrating instead on a spell to block incoming magic from several sources. She instead used her pure strength. Kuroka was not a tall woman, although taller than her sister. Thankfully, she wasn't as large as her two opponents. The blow that she landed on one of them should have only made the two men stumble. Instead, thanks to her Senjutsu strength, the blow crumpled chests and armor like tinfoil, blood gushing out from within the armor.

The fact that our blood was red and arterial was actually a relief Kuroka as she sped past, racing towards where she had seen the spear disappear. There was such a scent of decay and so much vileness pounding into her senses now that Kuroka had thought for a moment that she might be facing all undead. And the idea of facing magic-using undead would imply she was coming up against forces serving the same God of Undead her sister had met near Kuoh.

A spell seared through her magical shielding from behind, and Kuroka quickly teleported herself to the side. This allowed her to dodge around another spell while she reached out with her Senjutsu-enhanced senses to feel out where her enemies were.

Because of that, she saw the magic of several wards around them slowly starting to power up as she raced towards where the spear had come from. She quickly turned to the side and up onto another rooftop, then down onto a rare road in this area of Cairo. There she rushed along, before quickly once more disappearing under an illusion, transforming into her cat-form.

*The spear might be able to find me, but I doubt anything else will, she thought, racing through an alleyway and into a hole that only someone as small as a cat could've entered, exiting out into a hovel, then out again past into a small series streets. Good grief, how big is this bounded field, nyaa?*

It was only because even in cat-form, Kuroka could continue to use her Senjutsu senses to spot still more traps.

She pulled up abruptly, shifting forms, then smashing through a ceiling up onto the roof, flipping herself up further to a taller roof connected to the first story one she had smashed onto. There she lashed out with a kick towards an attacker who had just appeared there while preparing a follow-on spell.

The attacker caught her foot easily, and to her shock, Kuroka recognized the being who had done so. Or rather, not who he was, but what.

The being who had caught her foot was a tall man, taller than anyone she had ever met before, even Herakles, wearing an outfit that looked like it had been taken from Egyptian hieroglyphs. He was also even more broad-shouldered, like a troll from the Wizarding World. His eyes, however, gleamed with intelligence. A feral predatory intelligence, because those were the eyes of a crocodile, set in the head of a crocodile.

But worse was the creature's aura. For it was the aura of a God, a being who was at least as powerful magically as a normal Maou, or more so. Not up to, say, Sirzechs level, maybe, but still way out of Kuroka's league.

With a slight twitch of his hand, the demigod hurled her aside, and Kuroka slammed so hard against the side of the building that Kuroka let out a gasp. However, she shouted out a spell, slamming her hands together as if she was trying to squeeze the crocodile man as her magic reached out to him. "Kasha!" A space-time barrier went up all around the being in front of her, compressing and pulling the man into a pocket dimension.

Gae Bolg took Kuroka in the side right before the spell finished, tearing through her body and out again, heading towards the crocodile man's outstretched hand. Yet the spell she had just cast on the crocodile man held, capturing him for a moment even as Kuroka fell back and off the building into a small private garden which someone had turned into a trash heap.

Even bleeding heavily from her side Kuroka still landed on her feet while her chakra began healing her as she wove more illusions. Black cats and Kurokas spun away from her in every direction, racing off. Simultaneously, Kuroka herself hid for a few seconds, gathering herself while making certain that the space-time barrier continued to contain the crocodile man.

*He's got to be the leader here, with that kind of aura. If my spell can contain him, I think I can get out of here,* she thought to herself. No longer was Kuroka trying to win or get to the bottom of what was going on here. No, Kuroka wanted to escape, get as far away from that guy as possible. And since even Kuroka couldn't teleport directly out of a Bounded Field, she had to find and get out from underneath the edge of the bounded field encapsulating them all before escaping.

With that in mind, Kuroka skirted around where her doppelgangers and cats were leading her attackers in a merry chase, recovering her strength as she moved in a wide circle. Thanks once more to her enhanced magical senses, Kuroka could feel the edge of the bounded field, and She burst through it, coming out into an astonishingly open area.

It looked like a square of some kind, a historical site perhaps, judging by the large statue in the center, which was the statue of some kind of goddess with catlike features. Kuroka had a brief moment to be amused at the appropriateness of that statue before another set of runes suddenly started glowing all around her. She then attempted to teleport, only to scream as once more she was stopped, and this time, it was no illusion thrust into her mind. The spell she

thought had been used earlier now truly stopped her from using her spatial manipulation-type teleportation, and Kuroka's eyes widened in shock and fear.

A group of attackers appeared then, forming out of the ground almost, and Kuroka didn't have time to figure out whether or not that meant that they were real or illusions like her own as they began to launch spells at her before she could even give them a good look. In response, Kuroka opened her mouth, gathering her magic into her mouth first, before breathing out in their direction, a poison cloud appearing there and growing, filling the entire area.

Her attackers once more turned out to be human, and all of them fell back or used a wizard-style spell to create a Bubble of clean air around their heads. And behind Kuroka came her pursuers. The space-time barrier had been broken, she could sense it, and at the back of the pack was the crocodile man.

Turning at bay, Kuroka began one of her more impressive spells. Hundreds of burning wheels appeared all around Kuroka, each of them the size of her head, as she launched them in various directions, each of them impacting an attacker.

As she turned and raced away, hoping to escape the edge of the runic array, she didn't see several of those spells bouncing back and away until they crashed into the ground behind her. She looked over her shoulder as she ran, then hastily tossed up a Protego, the spell appearing around her as several spells lashed at her from either side.

Her shields absorbed all of the magic coming towards them, then she lashed out with another spell, this one a simple tripping spell that she had learned from some of the wizards, although in this case monstrously overpowered. It still took less magic than most of her own attacks, though, and Kuroka was running on fumes right now. She could literally feel her magic being sapped away. *They aren't stopping my teleportation spell. They sapped me of too much magic to use it.*

The nearly hundred people all around her went down, some of them having their legs broken, others simply falling forward. Even the crocodile-man-god-thing stumbled and used his spear instead to keep him upright instead of launching it towards her.

The next spell lashed out, a massive Immobilus followed by a blinding spell. Kuroka chained the spells together like the best Wizards could, and both struck, catching the deity and several others. This caused the afflicted to raise their hands to their faces, the being even dropping Gae Bolg.

With her back secured for now, Kuroka was about to transform into her cat form again and scamper away when her eyes widened. Titi had just appeared beyond the edge of the runic array. And before Kuroka had even a second to blink, before the woman raised a single finger and launched a tiny spell towards Kuroka. It looked almost like she had conjured a needle out of

thin air to slam into Kuroka's chest. But when it hit, the spell transformed, and Kuroka shrieked as her magical resistance was overcome in a way that Titi, as a mere Witch, should never have been able to do.

“AAAAHGGGGGHHHHH!” Electrical energies flowed through her body, overcoming her Senjutsu durability and causing her to collapse. The next second, the ground underneath her rose, clamping down on her legs and transfiguring into cold iron, sapping her connection to the natural magic of the world even further.

Two more similar spells landed out, and Kuroka screamed again and again before she fell onto her side, twitching, her eyes rolling up in her skull. The spear-butt crashed into the side of the Nekoshou's head, and Kuroka fell into darkness.

OOOOOOO

The next day as the sun rose, Harry roused others and then popped back through to Barcelona, then back, transporting Hermione and Padma in Tir Na Nog, not without some misgivings admittedly – they would have access to Yubelluna and the others without him around - but they had to move on. He also changed the time differential from one to one to one to four, in favor of Danan, before returning to Barcelona. This way, four days would pass in Danan for every day in Egypt, which would help the projects along there immensely. Even if Akeno, Kala, and Yubelluna might feel a bit lonely.

As he appeared after dropping Hermione and Padma off, he found that the others were ready to go, a quick, the remnants of a small breakfast currently being cleared away by Lavender. “Everyone ready to go?”

“Tell me, have you ever been to Egypt before Harry Potter?” Ramagupta asked while Harry's band nodded and stood up from their chairs.

“I can't say I have. I've not been called into Egypt before this, and the war against Riddle didn't spread that far. I do have the reports that the ICW are getting about the incidents down there, though, and a few of the incidents definitely have a tinge of the ancient magic variety, hence my involvement.”

“I have,” Tonks said, holding up his or her hand. “I'll be giving them a brief overview as we're traveling there.”

Ramagupta nodded at that, though he was looking at Tonks in question until Tonks smirked at him, looking over the others. “One of the things Ramagupta is concerned about is that the Egyptians have some very strange and very **strong** views on foreign women. If you travel away from the tourist traps and portions of the main cities as a woman, you should wear burqas, or just don't do it. Now I wouldn't be caught dead in a burqa, but...”

Here Tonks began to change. Her breasts disappeared, her hips shrank while her waist widened a bit. Between one moment and the next, Tonks had changed from her normal body into that of a nondescript man. As the others watched, her skin tanned itself down to the level of someone who spent quite a bit of time in the sun, and then her hair and eyes turned black. A few crow's feet were added for good measure, and then her clothing started to change as she held up a hand pointing the finger at herself. "I have other ways to blend in, heh," Tonks snorted, and even her voice was now that of a man, spell works about the only way.

Ramagupta stared in shock. "A Metamorph! That is an incredibly rare gift you have there, Miss Tonks. I cannot think of any alive in India who can fully transform themselves like that. There are a few partial Metamorphs perhaps, but none with the ability to change their entire bodies like that."

"Regardless, we should get going," Harry announced, standing up. "I hope to see you three in Kuoh soon."

Parvati nodded, then clicked her fingers in the manner of someone who had just remembered something. "By the way, you might want to talk to Bill and Fleur when you get down there."

Harry why Harry looked at her in confusion. "Why Fleur? I mean, I know Bill is working with the goblins, and they have a major presence down there, but..."

"Fleur became tired of how many weeks Bill was spending away from home, and they took Victoire down there instead. They are living in the magical quarter in Alexandria now. Although I understand that she is having second thoughts about it, considering the prejudice against Veela there is double what it was in Britain, only perhaps with less spellfire in the offing. Spitting and name-calling when she or Victoire are in public is not unusual."

"Ouch," Harry murmured, shaking his head, before exchanging one last hug with Parvati, nodding formally to Ramagupta and holding up the disk from Shiva. "As soon as we're done in Egypt, I'll follow up on this, I promise."

Rama nodded at that, and he, Lavender and Parvati walked the group down to the docks, where they watched as Harry unshrunk the ship, and the group departed after a final round of farewells. "Now that, that is what I call traveling in style," Lavender quipped.

On the ship, Tonks waited until everyone was comfortably scattered around the deck before she began to give her overview of what she had learned in her trips to Egypt. "First, be ready to be crowded, even in comparison to Tokyo. There are scads of people in Alexandria and other Egyptian cities, and they crowd you all the time, even in the magical quarter, which is called Lighthouse Lane, or just the Lane. Second, added to that, Egypt is freaking ancient. You will be hard-pressed to find a single segment of even most of the major cities that don't have some kind of ancient ruin."



“Wait, what?” Harry asked, surprised. He’d done some online research and had known about the population thing, but not that.

“Yeah, that’s going to make our investigations very annoying if whatever is going on is being caused by something like what we found in Ireland.” Tonks shrugged. “Nothing we can do but let you and your God's eyes go to work, Harry, sorry.” Harry winced at that, and she went on.

“Okay, here’s the bit that you, Harry, and you, Loup, will need to know. Unless we go about covered by illusions to make us look like locals, we will be badgered. Everyone and their mother will be trying to sell us stuff. They will be friendly, sort of, like that fake friendly attitude people salespeople get. On the streets and as foreigners, we will deal with that all the time. At rest, in watering holes, they are like, the exact opposite unless they talk to you or each other. Beware of the noise. In fact, you and Loup should probably use magic to deaden your hearing when we go ashore.”

“Great,” both werewolves drawled.

Tonks ignored them beyond a smirk sent their way. “You probably won’t need translation spells, Harry, Loup. Most people you meet will speak English. That’s because there are so many different dialects of Arabic that any two speakers might be unable to communicate. This is a big deal, which they get around by speaking English, or at least Pidgin English.”

She did pause then, looking at Harry. “Do you expect us to actually blend in?”

“Yes, at least in the nonmagical world. I take it that would be impossible without some work on our end?” Harry guessed.

“If we’re white, we’re tourists,” Tonks affirmed. “So we’ll need to use some color changing charms. It is really that bad, trust me. Tied into that, we should stop at the first ATM and get out some cash. British pounds or American.”

“What?” Kiba blinked, surprised. “Why?”

“If we want to be on the good side of people, there’s no better way then throwing out what the locals call “Yankee doodle dollars.” At Kiba’s look, she chuckled dryly. “Yeah, they actually call it that. “And while throwing out massive amounts of foreign cash is not a good idea, using it in even small amounts will instantly get whoever we’re bribing or talking to on our good side, hoping for more.”

Tonks breathed in, then pushed on while the others just looked confused. “Which brings me naturally to another point. Tipping is **HUGE** in Egypt. It’s referred to in movies sometimes as Baksheesh. Local or tourists, you will be expected to tip for the oddest, sometimes smallest things. Directions? Tip. Ask for someone to pass the salt tip. Small amounts though, a dollar or two, but we will need a lot of small denominations for that.”

Kiba shook his head, somewhat bemused by what he was hearing, while Loup looked extremely uncomfortable, although not at that last bit, not quite understanding how big a problem that might be. On the other hand, Issei wanted to go back to the earlier point as to why Tonks was currently a man. "Just please tell that everyone doesn't go around in a burqa! What is a life worth living if that's all you have to look forward to! This is Egypt. There should be nudey bars on every street!"

"Is that your equivalent of the 'roads are paved with gold'?" Kiba had to ask.

"Oh, shut up! Egypt's the home of Cleopatra, right? The most famous babe in all of history? How the heck can it be so, so boring!?"

"That was a long time ago, and things have changed. Hell, even wizards reckon that as ancient history," Tonks laughed. "Today, remember Egypt is an Islamic country. The magicals are not really firm believers in it, but they still have very firm views of what women should wear outside the home. And women alone, especially foreigners, that is just a very bad idea."

Loup asked, "Is it really that crowded?" Despite that being the first thing Tonks had said, it was the bit that stuck with him, along with the noise issue. Loup was someone who practically required a lot of elbow room, even with his werewolf curse under control now thanks to Harry.

Tonks nodded with a sad little sigh. "Yeah, it is. Egyptian cities are decently large, but the ones I was in all had massive populations, way more than London, Barcelona, or Dublin. It has to do with the fact that all of the cities are on the Nile, which supports like was ninety-five percent of people in the country? Something crazy like that. Egypt is not a well-watered land," she finished with a snort.

"You have any other advice for us?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, don't eat the food. And I'm not talking about the cheap stuff either. I'm telling ya that food quality is just really damn poor. You can find a few good places in the magical quarter, but I don't know any equivalent out in the nonmagical cities."

"What do the goblins do there? Kiba asked. "You all mentioned that they were heavily involved in Egypt, but you never said why." Since he had been told the goblins had attacked his King, Kiba had already termed they were enemies. If they became involved in the current mission was still up in the air, though.

"Tomb raiding," Harry and Tonks said as one. "It's a disgusting practice, but a necessary one considering how many ancient Egyptian pharaohs were wizards and how they were extremely inventive in terms of curses. The nonmagicals have only barely scratched the surface of the number of tombs out there, and every time a new tomb is found, it's got to be cleared of curses. That's what Bill does. He's a Curse Breaker who works with a team of goblins to raid the tombs."

"And of course, the goblins' love of gold drives them on in their searches," Harry added.

The discussion continued with Tonks fielding questions from the others as Harry continued to guide them through the Mediterranean Sea to Alexandria on Egypt's Mediterranean shores. In a little bit under an hour, they were there, coming into the port of Alexandria. Or rather the Eastern Harbor, which handled small ships like theirs, being too shallow for anything else. Alexandria apparently had two other ports. Harry could see dozens of yachts and smaller, less expensive personal vessels tied up on the quays or out in the harbor. But Tonks had indicated the Eastern Harbor was the closest to the magical segment of the city.

If Harry or the others had been assuming the city of Alexandria would look as old as Tonks had indicated, they would have been sorely disappointed. Unlike Cairo or some of the other ancient cities, Alexandria had been the site of numerous full-scale battles in its lifetime, destroying much of the urban area over time while also losing segments of its ancient royal quarter to the bay thanks to the ocean rising over time and earthquakes. Because of that, it was the most modern city in Egypt, and the view from the port reflected that: high rises, large apartment complexes, large warehouses and other modern buildings, even if their style did not match what they had seen in Barcelona.

Yet, even so, there were still hints of ancient glories. Harry had them above water soon enough, so they could see the Qaitbay Citadel, built where the ancient Lighthouse of Pharos had once stood. Harry could also make out segments of the port marked by warning lights and wires to make certain ships couldn't cross into that zone, showing where some of the ancient Alexandria had slid into the water. And beyond that, barely visible, Harry could make out a large statue in front of an equally large building, the Bibliotheca Alexandria, the local's attempts to recreate the famous library of Alexandria burned ages past.

As he pulled up alongside a previously empty dock for a moment, Harry ordered the others to wait, hitting the others and himself with a color-changing spell that gave their skin the same ruddy brownish color as the locals. With that done, he used another to change all of their hair colors to black as well, although Kiba looked rather pained at the idea.

With the humans done, Harry covered the dog with a powerful Illusion. If Alexandria was going to be as busy and crowded as Tonks had said, then moving around with a giant dog would probably bring too much attention to them, even if it acted friendly. And a Notice-Me-Not would not help overmuch if people kept on trying to walk through where the dog was standing or if people began to cause pileups to not do so, which could happen depending on the power of the spell.

With the preparations done, the crew clambered out of the boat onto the dock, and the ship was shrunk. After that, Harry continued to cover them all with a Notice-me-Not until they were out into the city proper. Almost instantly afterward, both werewolves winced as the sounds of the city hit them. There were thousands of people around them, moving, shouting, hawking wares, riding cars on some of the more distant streets, although here, the streets were

mostly pedestrians. The sounds bounced off the buildings, which were mostly modern multistory buildings. This created a vast wall of noise, of smell, and above all, people.

As they moved, the locals shouted at them, offering to show them around, advertising rickshaws and other ways to get around the city. Somehow despite their disguises, the group was seen as foreign and thus objects of interest for a while. As they moved on, this faded, but the sounds and the crowd did not.

Since she knew where they were going, Tonks led them through the city. Soon they met up with a large group of tourists, which at first seemed a mistake, considering how the locals started to shout and try to grab their attention. But it led them to a local area where they found an ATM machine, and Harry was able to get out quite a bit of money in small denominations for them all.

Harry and Loup, who had used another spell to deaden their hearing, were still being somewhat overwhelmed. The dog, too, was having trouble, although Harry had simply used a Muffliato on him. But the sheer number of people around them was still getting to the dog.

Thankfully for the dog's sanity, after about ten minutes walking on one of the few main streets, Tonks stopped beside a small, almost invisible side street. It looked as if it was just an old doorway until you realized it was a bit too deep for that and turned left onto another small street, so small they had to walk single file. "This will eventually lead us to Lighthouse Lane," Tonks gestured down the alleyway, which was, thankfully empty, bar a few people resting in doorways.

"All right." Harry looked over at Kiba, handing over his credit card, then used his phone to send the three boys a text with the address of the hotel he had discovered online during a brief break from making love to Rias in Dublin, as well as the reservation information. "You three, head to this hotel. If you can, listen in on conversations on the street. From the reports we were getting, the troubles here in Egypt have grown to the point that the nonmagicals are figuring out something's going on, and I want to know what they think about it. Loup, if you think you can blend in better alone, find a watering hole and listen in on what the local gossips are talking about. Kiba, Issei, stay together, and head to some tourist traps, do the same thing as Loup."

Loup was easily the most obviously intimidating of the trio and the oldest too. He also could use more Wizard-type spells, and despite Tonks saying they wouldn't need it, Harry had already hit him with a translation spell before shrinking their ship. And given the heat here in Egypt, the local equivalent of cafes would undoubtedly be busy all day.

Harry waited for Tonks to give Loup the name of a few drinking holes known as gossip centers, writing them out as she wasn't as tech-savvy as Harry was. "We'll meet up with you at around nine tonight at the hotel. I want to check in with Bill and start checking in with the local magicals."

The trio of boys headed off together, and Tonks led Harry and the dog, who looked relieved despite the narrowness of the alleyway. As they left the alleyway back into the street they had come from, Harry heard Issei begin to speak. "Look, are we certain that Tonks was on the level? I mean, this is foreign parts, right? And this city looks ultramodern. There have to be nudey bars around here somewhere."

Tonks and Harry looked at one another, then as one sighed and continued on. "Seriously wondering if bringing him around was a good idea."

"Eh, he's a devil. He'll probably survive the mob he might kick-off. Probably. And you didn't give him any of the money, so that will curtail his ability to wander." Tonks chuckled.

Finding the magical quarter after that was relatively easy. It was close to the tourist-heavy zone, hidden through a maze of back alleys and side passages that worked almost as well as the Notice-Me-Not covering Lighthouse Lane to conceal the area. But once you pushed through a door that should've led into a bar, you found yourself passing through a tunnel onto a slightly wider road on the other side, with dozens of other houses all around. These all looked so old they might have been built when Egypt was first conquered by Britain, wattle and daub mixed houses with several more British looking wood and brick houses.

Yet even here, there were a lot of people around. The area was a bit more open, but the crowd of people was still noisy. But with the dog out in the open, people gave them a wide berth, although Harry's scar got a few double-takes as he canceled his Color Change charm, and Tonks shifted back to her normal body.

To Harry's surprise, her clothing was much more conservative than most of the time. When Harry looked at her, she shrugged. "Like I said, even the magicals around here hold views about what women should wear in public."

"You think they'd bother us with the big guy here around?" Harry scoffed, patting the dog's flank, eliciting a woof in response that sent several people scrambling away.

"Point," Tonks laughed, waving a hand at Harry. "Do you want to do the honors?"

"Points me Bill Weasley's house," Harry intoned, and a moment later, he and Tonks were following stick he had picked up from the ground in that direction. Because of this, they were at a small house, one a bit smaller than Hermione and Padma's in Barcelona. *I'd wager that's the difference in styles and expense, though. Space has got to be way more expensive here than in Barcelona. Especially on the magical side of things*

Since he wasn't hiding his features here,

Knocking on the door, they waited until a woman's voice shouted, "One momen'," in an obvious French accent.

The door was flung open, and Harry smiled at Fleur Delacour-Weasley somewhat warily. "Hey Fleur, how are you doing? Is Bill in?"

Fleur was now just barely middle-aged, but even for a Witch, the years and single pregnancy she had gone through weighed lightly on her. She was still runway model gorgeous, with a figure that only Lavender and Susan Bones could match among the Witches Harry had ever met. Her blonde hair was currently up in a severe bun, and she was wearing flats instead of her normal – to Harry's knowledge anyway – heels, but this did not detract from her beauty.

She could also, thanks to her Veela heritage, turn into a fireball-wielding bird-woman. And she had done so the last time they had met in person thanks to the little matter of a national monument Harry had destroyed. Hence his wariness.

Fleur looked at him for a moment, then rolled her eyes and motioned Harry to come in. "Come in. And you don't 'ave to look so tense around me 'arry, I 'eard that you finally apologized and offered to pay for zhe damages to zhe Chateau de Ys. Zat did away with much of my anger."

Inside, Harry smiled a Victoire, who looked up at him, blinking in some surprise. Unlike Teddy, Harry hadn't really gotten to know Victoire very well since she and Lily had not bonded very well, one being very much a tomboy, the other a girly-girl. Now his presence barely registered before the little girl saw the giant dog. Unlike Fleur, who had discounted the dog almost entirely, she shrieked, leaping out of her chair and hiding behind it as she stared at the massive beast. "Grim!"

The others at the table with the young Veela also stared, although none of them were frightened. One of them, the most surprising to be present, was Gabrielle. She barely glanced at the dog before looking back at Harry, and her smile was a good deal larger than the younger girl. Gabrielle had not changed much since the last wizarding card she had sent Harry: she was still a willowy, petite blonde with the body of a gymnast or dancer, deep blue eyes, and long, blonde locks flowing down in a cascade down her back. *Thank God I told Issei to go with the others*, Harry thought, his worry at Fleur's presence disappearing to be replaced by another.

Bill was there too, and even more surprisingly, Charlie. Bill patted his daughter on the head, watching the giant dog warily, but Charlie hopped to his feet, making his way over. "Bloody Hell Harry, where'd you find a beast like him? He's magnificent!"

"Bill, Charlie, Gabrielle. I only expected to see Bill here, but this is a nice surprise. As for the dog, Charlie, that's a tale and a half," Harry had always liked talking to Charlie, who he'd always enjoyed speaking to on the few occasions they had met. Unlike Bill, Charlie hadn't come back to fight in the war against Riddle, or rather he had, just not stayed overlong. He'd come back for a few specific battles, then disappeared back to the Dragon Reserve he worked at in Romania quickly, unwilling to put up with his mother's diatribes about how dragon handling was too dangerous and when he was going to settle down.

“Hey Charlie, how they hangin’?” Tonks said on the heels of Harry’s words.

Bill and Charlie grinned and were about to speak before Gabrielle sashayed to her feet, smiling at Harry and moving towards him with arms outstretched. “Harry,” she said, her voice almost a purr. “And ‘ow are you doing, mon Chevalier?”

Harry laughed, hugging her once, as one would to a young acquaintance, then moving away from him hurt, keeping his eyes firmly on her face even though she was doing her best to draw his eyes down to her body. “I’m doing well. And how are your studies going, Potions Mistress?”

“Poorly.” Gabrielle frowned internally and wondering if she should try the Allure on Harry before deciding against it. Harry had proven his immunity to it before, and trying to influence him that way would probably just put him in a bad mood. “My Master’s ‘ouse was attacked, and ‘e ‘as gone into hiding, canceling our lessons. Zhe attackers were recently caught, but ‘e ‘as yet to return.”

“At least you have the opportunity to maybe go back. I’m still sending out my resume to other Dragon reserves,” Charlie growled, sitting back down and waving Harry to a seat Bill had just conjured up. “Would you believe that someone bought out the Romanian Dragon preserve? Simply hurled a pile of money at the government, then walked off with the deed to the land. Started to downsize right away, they did. I don’t know how that can possibly be legal, but they’re getting away with it for now.”

That was strange, but Harry shrugged his shoulders at it, considering that it wasn’t his problem. Surely the local government was keeping track of what was going on with the dragons, right? “Sorry to hear about that, Charlie, but I don’t know...” He frowned, thinking as a sudden thought came to him. “Actually, I might have a job for you in the future. Contact me or travel to Japan and talked to me there once this issue with Egypt is done with.”

“You’d have me on even after my mother and the others...” Charlie began, wilting with guilt a bit. “I wasn’t part of that, but I didn’t exactly try to stop her efforts to get Lily back with Gin-Gin. I thought it was the right thing to do, just didn’t like the way they were going about it.”

“Yes, it was ‘orrible what zat little girl was doing,” Gabrielle sniffed, ignoring the fact that Ginny was older than her. “But I take eet zat you and your daughter are well?”

“Daughters,” Harry answered with a fond smile. “I adopted another girl named Asia, and there are a few others as well who I have taken under my wing..”

Gabrielle frowned, wondering what he meant by ‘others’ but decided to set that to one side. “But you are done wiz Ginny entirely? You sent ‘er packing?”

“I packed my bags nearly a year ago. I’m finished with Ginny permanently now,” Harry shrugged, counting from the time he had walked out of the Black Mansion. “As far as I’m

concerned, no offense Bill, Charlie, but Lily no longer has any magical ties to the Weasley family. Family ties can be rebuilt maybe, but only if the Weasley side of things works at it.”

Both men winced, knowing how much their mother had hoped that Ginny would eventually be able to access the Prewitt family Grimoire and accounts at Gringotts. But now, it looked as if the girl was going to have to become the Prewitt Family Head the hard way: remarrying and having a firstborn daughter. And only when that daughter reached puberty would Ginny be able to access the Prewitt family’s money and magic. Despite their concern for their youngest sibling and only sister, they accepted Harry’s words as fact. Molly and Ginny, and maybe even Arthur and certainly Ron had done a good job of burning bridges between them all and Harry.

“But you are free? Free to pursue and be pursued. This is a **go~od** thing, non?” Gabrielle asked, stretching her hands up above her head and thrusting out her chest a little as if working out a cramp. *The redhaired la pouffiasse (whore) is not here, and that means Harry is fair game.*

“I’m afraid my wife would have an issue with that,” Harry laughed, deciding to both get it over with and use humor to maybe soften the blow.

“W-what!?” Gabrielle squawked, her sensual air disappearing as she stared at Harry, while the others also looked at Harry in surprise, although Fleur frowned as she felt her sister’s Allure start to go out of control. “Mariee (Married)! You have, have married that rousse (redhead)?” she exclaimed, biting off several names that she knew would have her sister cursing her for using them in front of Victoire.

“Magically, yes. We swore a magical vow to one another. We didn’t realize it at the time, but don’t think either of us have it ever had caused to complain.” Harry smiled, his smile full of affection and love as he shook his head with a laugh. “And you would not believe how good she is with Lily. Even setting aside everything else that binds us together, I couldn’t be happier with the arrangement. We’ve even been talking about having a baby of our own next year,” Harry added, wanting to stop this in its tracks.

Gabrielle was still gaping as Tonks leaned over Harry’s shoulder, whispering, “That was mean.”

“Rias asked me to do that if I met Gabrielle in person at any point. Besides, you know how busy my ladies are already keeping me. My heart I can give freely, my man bits are already on a timeshare, and there’s no room in the schedule for anyone else,” Harry whispered back.

Shaking his head and decided not to get involved with any of that like any sane man would Bill decided to change the subject while his wife was looking on in interest, wondering both about this redhead that had so captured Harry’s heart, and instilled in him the ruthless streak necessary to finally ween Gabrielle off her infatuation with him. “So you’re going to be looking into what’s been going on down here, Harry? More power to you, boyo. In fact, do you



want some help? I know the ins and outs around here, and I've got contacts sides on the wizarding side of things as well as with the goblins.

The older man shook his head, setting his dragon claw earring to jangle. "And let me tell you, whatever you've been hearing, it's getting worse..."

### Scene break

Voices roused Kuroka from unconsciousness, but instead of stretching or curling back up as she normally would, Kuroka stilled instantly, controlling her breathing in such a way to make it seem as if she was still unconscious, going through a series of mental exercises to deal with the pain going through her head at the moment. Once she was certain she had her pain under control, Kuroka started to feel for her magic.

At that point, Kuroka barely stopped herself from flinching as the Nekoshou realized that she couldn't access her magic at all. Not her Devil magic, not her chakra, **nothing**. Kuroka could also feel chains on her legs and wrists and could tell she was strung up against a wall.

She was trapped, completely and utterly. How that could be possible, Kuroka didn't know, but the barrier between her will and magic was very, very real. *Terrifyingly so*, she thought, before concentrating on the voices, straining her ears towards the conversation occurring nearby.

It was a man and a woman speaking. They spoke in low, familiar tones, and Kuroka could detect some actual affection as they spoke to one another. But there was more anger than affection in the man's voice as Kuroka was finally able to make out actual words.

"...realize that you were concerned about her ability to senses your emotions. We are not ready for this, damn it! The Harvest will not be nearly as great as it could otherwise have been, and I know that the Church has just sent in some of their specialists to work with the locals. If I had time as we had talked about, I could've learned who exactly and planned accordingly to take advantage of it. Your desires have always gotten you in trouble, my dear wife, and this is no exception."

"I have never once heard you complain about my desires before husband mine," the woman chuckled throatily. Kuroka instantly realized that the woman almost sounded like Titi, only there was a power and timber to them that Titi had not had.

The husband laughed wryly, and there was a brief moment and a smacking of skin on skin that indicated to Kuroka that the two of them had shared a kiss or something. But when the husband spoke again, his voice was very serious, and now straining, Kuroka felt that she recognized his voice as well in some manner. It was the voice of another wizard from the Khaos Brigade, one of the ones that was close to Vali, maybe. *Or was he close to Cao Cao?* For some

reason, the sudden realization came to Kuroka that he might be close to them both. *But that would mean...*

"Yet we must be serious, my dear. I realize that Kuroka is a prize that you could never ignore, but acting against her in such a manner now? It makes us accelerate our plans far too much. The crisis here in Egypt was supposed to come to a head simultaneously or near the so-called Peace Talks that the Three Factions will be holding. Now your cover may well be blown entirely with the Khaos Brigade, and suspicion brought down on the other wizards within the Brigade like myself at a time when we are not ready just yet to deal with Ophis."

"I have been the one who has been following events here in Egypt closer than you, my husband. You have been too busy watching the powers-that-be in the Khaos Brigade rather than the plans we created here in Egypt before the Khaos Brigade came into being. The Harvest will be more than enough. Here, look at this. It's a record of what our followers have been doing." There was a rustling as if from paper.

But when the husband spoke, those words did not address that point, and Kuroka detected a faint rustle of hair rustling over cloth. "Regardless of the plan here in Egypt, we cannot forget the rest of the world. Not just yet."

"We have more than enough bolt holes to escape to if we must, and you forget my alter-ego with the ICW." The woman's tone turned scathing. "I am not an idiot, husband! And you are mistaking my admitted hastiness with Kuroka with a lack of forethought. I have already instigated my own demise as far as the Khaos Brigade knows, which will negate any suspicion on you and the other wizards. Which will let you, in turn, keep working on your own plans for Ophis."

"But..."

The woman overrode her husband's words. "I realize that you and I both had thought to use the events here in Egypt as an endgame. But the goal has changed, my husband. After all, what kind of Pharaoh would be happy with just Egypt when he could have the world?"

When she went on, her voice was now both conciliatory and worried. "Besides, I have just learned this morning that Harry Potter is here in Egypt among the wizards."

"What!?" the man hissed, his voice an alloy of shock, anger, and real, honest hatred.

*Nyaa, I wonder what Harry Potter did to make these two hate him so. Or is it the threat he represents that makes them hate him?*

"I said you have been too busy with the Khaos Brigade," the woman retorted, her tone now censorious. "I passed on a report to you that told you that the wizards had asked him to look into events here in Egypt. So either we use what we have here in Egypt now or run the risk

of Harry Potter possibly dismantling it. We **know** he has done something to himself. And a demigod or whatever he is might be able to see much of what we have laid out here for the Harvest."

"Perhaps, or perhaps a false trail..." The husband broke off then corrected himself, becoming slower as he worked it through. "No, you are correct. If Harry Potter is here and has access to Deific magic, he will see much of the underlying structure we have created. Damn him! That fool boy, he has blundered into power time and time again, and hearing of him being here, it is almost enough for me to believe there is some kind of destiny controlling us all."

There was a rustle of paper now and a period of silence as Kuroka assumed the man was reading over whatever was written on the papers his wife had handed him. "Very well," he said, his tone final. "You are correct. There is enough of the structure in place for us to have a bountiful harvest. My apologies, wife."

His tone abruptly changed back to a more businesslike one as he questioned his wife. "how long before the receptacles are prepared?"

"After we give the order, empowering them will take but a few hours of sunlight. I had one of our more Arithmetically inclined followers work that formula out on the last page," the woman replied, her tone now smug.

There was another rustle of paper, and the man began to chuckle, and then a sound of a finger tapping on wood came to Kuroka. "Hahaha, the Holy Nile they call it even now when they believe so fervently in their Allah, or God or whatever they call that dead freak, knowing instinctively that all of life in Egypt owes its existence to the Nile. But they have forgotten that it was the Pharaohs who made it holy at all."

There was a sound of two quick steps, and then a jab of some kind to stick to Kuroka's side caused her eyes to fly open. She hissed angrily, lunging for the man who just kicked her. But chained to the wall, she was unable to get far, and the man laughed.

Unable to reach them, Kuroka huffed, drooping in such a way in her manacles such that her kimono almost opened up entirely, giving the man a delectable view of her chest. "That's no way to treat a lady. Surely you could've come up with some much nicer way of waking me up, nyaa~?" she flirted.

"Even tied up, you still have a mouth on you? The woman snarked. "That's almost admirable. Almost."

"You know, I had thought there was something you were hiding, Titi, but a streak of megalomania? That wasn't in my guesses. Perhaps it should've been, jealousy and envy you certainly was, nyaa," Kuroka retorted, preening and thrusting out her chest.

Snorting, the man stood back, one arm going around the woman, and Kuroka took a moment to examine the couple in the light of the nearby torches.

The two of them at first looked almost plain. The couple's clothing was nothing that would stand out from the crowd of normal Cairo citizens. But after barely a second of examining their faces, that normality faded. The two of them were somewhat decent-looking. The man was handsome, tall, broad shoulders although not inhumanly so, his stance confident, his eyes probing into Kuroka's. Black eyes they were, deep and dark with power. His skin was tanned, like any Egyptian native, his chin pointed, jutting forward almost aggressively, under a thin pouty looking mouth.

Something about the construction of that face made Kuroka realize her earlier guess was right. This was Jason Maagh, although the man's skin color and many of his features seemed to have changed. *An illusion, I suppose, but one that fooled Vali, Cao-Cao and me!? That's worrisome, nyaa.*

His wife was not nearly as pretty as her husband was handsome. She was striking perhaps, with a trim figure, long, well-shaped legs in pants rather than the traditional burka, with perhaps a B-cup chest. Her eyes two were dark black, set into a face slightly more tanned than her husband's, with long black hair cascading down one side of her chest and face, obscuring one of those eyes. She wasn't ugly by any means, but she certainly wasn't as pretty as Kuroka herself.

Beyond their appearance, these two gave Kuroka a feeling of age, more than anyone she had ever met before. Ophis didn't give you the feeling of age, simply unchanging eternity. But these two, these two, were **ancient**. Kuroka was very certain that she had never been in the presence of anyone as old as these two.

In the face of Kuroka's taunt, the woman kept control of her temper. "If you expect your words to make me angry to Kuroka, you are sorely mistaken. Becoming angry at you in the current circumstances would be tremendously foolish. You are in our power, and no one else from the Khaos Brigade knows where you are. Our team is dead, ambushed by a team of Aza'imi at my instigation. The majority of Aza'imi, who had arrived recently in Egypt and could have also proven a threat, were also slain in the conflict. The remainder does not constitute a real threat."

The Aza'imi were the Islamic equivalent of the Church's exorcists. Few had as much combat potential as the higher ranks of the Church's forces, but there were many more of them, and all were fanatical in following orders. A group of Magicians, humans who had made contracts with Devils to gain magical powers, were the natural prey of such.

"So you are alone, without allies or any chance of escape. I would suggest that you comport your words and actions to that fact. Your stay here can be pleasant, or it can.. not be." Titi smiled thinly, seeing no need to make her threat plainer than that.

"Where's the fun in that?" Kuroka quipped, shaking her body a little in the cage, as she turned her attention back to the man. "Besides, I don't see your husband complaining, nyaa."

"A free show is always amusing, but if you expect your wiles to do anything more than amuse, you are again, as my wife just said, mistaken. We have planned for too long, been together for too long, for an admittedly nice rack of breasts to get between us now." With that, the man reached forward, gently taking Kuroka's chin in his hand, twisting her head this way and that way.

Even chained and weakened, Kuroka possessed some measure of her Senjutsu instincts was still there, and to Kuroka, the man's touch felt like it was solid poison, causing her to almost twitch away from his touch before she could stop herself. Still, she did and began to use her feminine wiles to get the man on her side in some fashion despite wanting to either crawl into a hole and hide or claw the man's eyes off. "Are, are you su, sure?" She stuttered.

The man snorted once more as he twisted her head this way and that, then looked over at his wife. "I will eventually be touching all I want, but it will no longer be your body, per se. She is magnificent, my dear. I have not been so close to her as this before, but I can understand your desires."

The wife rolled her eyes. "Please, if it was just her body, I could change into that now. No, what I want is the ability to manipulate chakra that comes naturally to a Nekoshu."

The man chuckled, moving over to her again, reaching behind the woman for something. "Very well. We will go forward with your plan and start the Harvest now. You will have your prize wife."

As the couple looked at her, something in their eyes made Kuroka feel real honest fear for the first time since she had handed Koneko off to the Gremory family. That fear stripped away the last of Kuroka's typical insouciance, and she stared at them hard, her hands reaching up to grip the chains above her manacles, as she back upright against the wall. "W, who are you, really? Or should that be what are you really? Because for certain, you are not as simple human as a pair of humans as you look. "

Shaking his head, the man side theatrically. "So sad. All of humanity and its offshoots should know their rightful rulers. But I suppose that will not matter to the dead."

Before Kuroka could speak, the man twisted away from his wife, bringing around a heqa-staff, the end of which crashed into Kuroka's Temple. And once more, Kuroka only knew darkness.

**OOOOOO**

Leaning back in his chair and trying to ignore the shocked, fuming, and despairing look Gabrielle was sending Harry's way, Bill tapped his fingers together thoughtfully. "First of all, what you should know is outside the Magical quarter here in Alexandria, there aren't very many areas within Egypt which are part of the Wizarding World. That isn't to say there are other areas where old magic occasionally pops up, but the Aurors here in Egypt are damned good at responding to that kind of thing."

He pulled out a map, gesturing down at it. It was not Egypt's map as the non-magicals knew it, although it showed much of the same features. This one showed more, however. The largest of this was an entire segment of the Giza Plateau, where the great pyramids and the giant Sphynx and so forth, that the locals had marked off as empty, were shown as not being so empty. Beyond that were a few scattered oases, which Bill pointed to now.

"These are ancient wizard towns, small, incredibly insular, and only vaguely under the control of the British government. They keep themselves to themselves, never venturing away from their oases, and both sides have long been happy to allow that to continue. I know the Aurors have reached out to them recently, and all of them have faced the same troubles as elsewhere, although nowhere near as much."

He pointed to a few other points, including a large area. "This area is goblin land."

"Excuse me?" Harry asked, cocking an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"They own it completely. It's goblin land, goblin laws, even mostly goblin population, their own little fiefdom within the rest of WW Egypt."

"But that's the area where the Pyramids are," Harry protested, looking between Bill and Tonks, who was watching Gabrielle closely, prepared for if the girl's anger at her putdown got the better of her. "It's a giant tourist destination."

"It is. And most of the companies who organize that kind of thing are goblin controlled. They have a lot more to do with the business side of the nonmagical world in Egypt than I know the Wizengamot would be happy with. But it's been that way for so long, they can't do anything about it. And there are entire areas there that are magically protected, against nonmagical detection, and the goblins guard access jealously even to us Wizards."

"Do you know if they are dealing with the same troubles that the rest of Egypt are?"

"I know for a fact they are," Bill said with a chuckle, his wife moving over to gently knead his shoulders, her face creased with worry. "I was actually working at a dig site out there. We'd just broken into a new tomb, and I was breaking a few curses when I heard shrieks from outside. By the time I got back up to the surface, it was all over. The goblin guards had dealt with what amounted to a large-scale Infreri outbreak. It was the same kind of thing that we've

seen a time or two here in the Magical Quarter, the dead rising, then fog appearing. Beasts coming out of the fog and attacking anyone they find.”

“How many deaths have there been caused by all this? And how good is the coverup?” Tonks asked. “I mean, we’ve heard its trouble, but I know there weren’t any deaths being reported in the Prophet.

“A few hundred or so nonmagical’s, eighteen or so magicals,” Bill said, shrugging his shoulders apologetically. “Sorry, I don’t have numbers on the nonmagical side of things. Not only doesn’t the Egyptian government keep track of that stuff all that well, but the Aurors, most of them, just don’t care about the nonmagicals enough to count the dead after they finish cleaning up an attack.”

As Tonks and Harry’s eyes hardened, Bill hurried on. *Eesh, Killing Curse stare indeed. And why do I have this strange desire to kneel?* “However, the coverups are holding for now. But this is so widespread, the rumors about the fog, about ancient beasts, that news is spreading. Not well enough to be newsworthy, but certainly tabloid-worthy if you know what I mean. And here in Egypt, there are tons of tabloids.”

Gesturing down at the map, Bill went on. “I’ve marked down on this map where many of the incidents have occurred with the help of my local friends, and there is a kind of pattern to the majority of the attacks. But unfortunately, it’s the same kind of pattern that all life in Egypt follows.”

Harry looked at the map thoughtfully, then twitched his head towards Tonks. “The Nile River. Tonks told me how dominant it is in determining where Egyptian cities are built and everything else. And the problems are happening across the entire country?” *Are we dealing with some kind of local God connected to the river and death?* He thought to himself. *But I thought Egypt’s Pantheon would have been wiped out in the earliest times of monotheism.*

“Yes,” Bill nodded firmly. “I don’t have friends in every Egyptian city, of course, but I know that at least these events are happening in Cairo and here in Alexandria and a few of the other areas.”

While Harry frowned, staring down at the map, Tonks took over the discussion, asking about the specific types of undead and monsters being reported. Bill fielded them as well as he could, but since he hadn’t been directly involved in any of the fights yet, he didn’t have much information to give other than on the attack the goblins had dealt with. That one had been made almost entirely of Infreri.

Beyond that, he did warn that there were wizards involved in it somehow. Aurors had reported taking spellfire occasionally, and two of the dead were Aurors killed in the line of duty. This wasn’t what Harry had wanted to hear, but he was still confident his little group would be

able to deal with whatever they faced. *Although if not, I might want to call Akeno and the others forward. Or even more of our allies, just in case.*

Meanwhile, Gabrielle continued to stare soulfully at Harry, and Harry resolutely ignored her. He had not been lying earlier. Harry already had more than enough ladies in his life. He was not on the market for anymore more. And frankly, not only had Gabrielle's courtship of him without reaching out to Lily had been a major mistake on her part, but right now, Harry had more important things on his mind than a young girl's blind fixation on him. "Can you take me to one of these places?"

Gabrielle's depressed anger had created an awkward feeling in the air that had been getting to everyone despite their best efforts to ignore it. So it was no surprise that Bill stood up quickly, with Charlie following eagerly, giving the giant dog a final pat on his head. "I'll get my coat."

Understanding why they were so eager, Harry simply nodded but had to ask. "You have heard about the issues I've had with Ginny and your mother, right? I don't want to put any of you in the position of having to choose sides if you all help me."

Fleur spoke up then, shaking her head and patting her daughter on the head. "We already 'ave. Admittedly, I was furious wiz you for a time until your apology arrived. But, zhe way that your former wife went about zings, and how miss Weasley backed her up 'as left a bad taste in our mouths."

Charlie just guffawed, slapping his broad chest with one hand. "You offered me a job. That's more than enough for me, thanks."

"Good. In that case, Let's meet up with the others and head to one of these places where you know trouble happened here in Alexandria."

One of the areas where the phenomenon had been seen in Lighthouse Lane, the nearest portion of it to the Shallalat Gardens, an open garden area that Harry reflected was a nice green break from the rest of the surrounding city. From where he stood on the roof of a squat apartment complex overlooking the magical area, Harry frowned, seeing something there like a vague, barely-visible fog. It took him a few seconds to realize what it was, then he began to curse. The others looked at him in surprise, and Harry shook his head. "Well, I know a part of what's been going on here now."

Tonks looked to him sharply, and Harry shrugged. "Deific magic has been here, I'm certain. It looks like an extremely diffuse cloud of purple and orange lights to my senses."

"Which means none of us going to be able to see it," Tonks groaned while Bill and Charlie, who had accompanied them, were looking confused. Still, Harry was in no rush to explain once more everything he had been up to, so they would have to live with their



ignorance for now. "Are you sure?" the Metamorph chuckled at the look Harry gave him, holding her hands up in surrender. "Well, can you tell us anything about it?"

"Not a chance. It's too diffuse, and I can't see any kind of shape to it. When was the attack here again?" Harry turned to ask that of Bill, who shrugged his shoulders while noticing the dog was looking around, his hackles on end from some smell on the wind before calming down once more.

"A week, maybe? Maybe a little more."

Scowling, Harry shook his head. "Let's get to questioning some of the locals who witnessed the attack. Unless you can take us to a more recent one?"

At that, Bill replied in the negative. "No. The Aurors won't let anyone close to any of the attacks before a few days have gone by. You could talk to the chief Auror, though."

"Let's set up a meeting with him tomorrow, then. Questions now, then we'll meet up with the others. Hopefully, they will have discovered something," Harr answered.

Tonks scoffed. "You think we'll be that lucky?"

"No, but a man can dream, can't he?" Harry replied, not looking forward to another round of investigation. *And this time, I don't know if my own Deific powers will be nearly as much help as it was in Ireland, curse it.*

OOOOOOO

Loup, Issei, and Kiba moved among the crowd in the city's more tourist-friendly centers, joining some tourist-type expeditions, looking around them in interest. None of them had ever been abroad before, and the city was fascinating, and Loup stayed with the others, getting used to the atmosphere of the city.

Kiba and Issei both believed that the Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqqafa were amazing, even if their one attempt to break off from the tour resulted in Loup being forced to use his magic to hide them from a few guards. Pompey's Pillar was Loup's favorite. Thanks to the locals keeping the area around it clear.

Although none of them could discern any magic in these areas, Loup's reason for the Pillar being his favorite was caused by the only major issue all of them had with just being in the city: there were just too many people around! Japanese cities were very crowded too, and all three men had thought they were prepared for this, but they really hadn't been.

Even in the touristy sections, there were so many people, it was almost too much for the werewolf. Kiba, in contrast, had issues with being crowded occasionally, but not nearly to

the extent of Loup. He could, however, do without the veiled giggling and suggestive comments from the ladies among the tourists who saw his face.

As for Issei, he continually went from enjoying himself being abroad and exploring a new city to being depressed that the women here didn't dress up as well as they did back home. *Whoever created the burka, I hope your soul is enjoying its stay in hell*, he thought more than once, unaware of the irony inherent in that statement. The only things he could normally make out were vague shapes and faces, Egypt not being as conservative about hiding faces as other Arabic countries, rather covering their hair for some reason, and that wasn't enough.

Despite that, all of them were slowly beginning to get used to the city while also using their magical senses to look around them. Thanks to training with Akeno and the others, Issei actually had a pretty good magical sense, but he didn't see anything out of the ordinary. At least at first.

But as they started to make their way outward from the Pillar into less touristy areas of the city, that changed as Issei paused, frowning thoughtfully. The others looked at him, and he shrugged, pointing to an image engraved into a signpost nearby. "That's supposed to be a sign of Ra, the Sun God, right? I've seen that kind of thing before. More times than I had actually expected."

"This is still within a tourist zone," Loup replied mildly. "That kind of thing is what brings in the crowds."

"Maybe," Issei said slowly. "But remember, most of that stuff here in Alexandria is supposed to be buried. Still, I suppose you're right, and um, I have something else more important to take care of." Then he looked around, his expression turning somewhat sheepish. "Er, does anyone know where the nearest bathroom is?"

It turned out that none of them did, and there were no signs of such around, which made them have to ask a few of the locals. This, in turn, gave them another experience with what the locals called Backsheesh. The man who gave them directions to the nearest bathroom coughed delicately as he finished, looking away as he held out his hand.

Money changed hands, and the group went on their way. While Issei and Kiba were dealing with the bathroom issue, Loup explored on his own for the first time. He moved through a few of the smaller side streets, feeling quite claustrophobic in them, but when he came back, he nodded to Issei. "I found a few more markings like that one you mentioned. Nothing magical about them as far as I can tell, but they looked almost new."

Kiba scratched his cheek thoughtfully, then nodded. "Let's start asking some of the locals about them. And remember to tip."

Doing so didn't give them much information. Even after paying nearly twenty pounds, the locals still weren't answering many questions about the markings. "They feel safer with them around?" Kiba questioned, looking at the others, who both nodded.

"I found a small, human-sized column with Ra's mark on it. It's ancient-looking, but it had offerings around it," Loup added. "Here in Alexandria, both those things are seriously unusual."

"I didn't find anything like that, but the locals basically told me that for some reason, they are just uneasy these days. I think we all know why," Issei said, his voice unusually serious. Issei was not used to making people nervous. Girls, maybe, but older men and women shouldn't be leery of even talking to him until he paid them. "I paid one guy a full twenty, and he only told me that there's a kind of feeling in the air and rumors going around, and to combat them, people are turning to old signs. He then went on to hastily tell me they all still believe in you-know-what, but it just makes them feel safer."

Like using the general term 'God', using Allah would cause Devils pain. Something they had discovered today when they overheard a few people use it.

The trio of boys looked at one another, then Kiba said, "I think we need to make a note of that column, Loup, and then move on. Let's see how widespread these markings are."

"Take to the air?" Loup advised, although his tone made it a question. Kiba had seniority here.

But the Knight merely nodded. "Excellent idea."

With the trio covered by a Notice-me-Not, and Kiba flying while carrying Loup with Issei's sometimes erratic aid, they canvased several miles of the city, although from the air finding anything was next it impossible. The buildings were too large, and most of the time too close as well. And every apartment complex seemed to have several cloth awnings spread between them, obscuring the ground even further. Even so, they found another column of similar design to the first, not exact, but it too had the image of Ra, a circular sun with hundreds of tiny rays coming out.

Finally, it came time to meet up with the locals at the hotel for the night. There, everyone discussed what they had learned, and after a quick trip out with Loup, Harry confirmed that the monument he found was alive with Deific magic. That was not a good sign. Worse was the fact Harry couldn't tell what the magic was. He could see it, but it was like seeing a page in Braille. He knew it was supposed to be read, but he couldn't understand it. It wasn't enough to tell Harry who was behind it, where they were based, or anything similar.

No, Harry was becoming more certain than ever that this was the start of another long investigation. Still, any information at this point in time was helpful, and he was fulsome in his praise of all three of the boys for noticing the monuments in the first place.

After the discussion broke up and the evening meal cleared away, everyone headed to their own bedrooms. Harry had booked them into a series of suites, so each of them had their own room, an extravagance Harry could easily afford and one which all of them were pleased by, especially Loup, who just wanted some time alone for a bit. Issei did too, but not for the same reasons, while Kiba called Tsubaki, and Tonks got in touch with Teddy.

For his Harry paused a moment, staring at the bed. This would be the first time in a long while that he had slept alone, and he shook his head. "You know what, no."

With that, Harry pulled out of the Fal stone he had previously used in Barcelona. He set it down and concentrated on the Undertaking within the stone, then was somewhere else, teleporting through back to the island of Fand. *Infinite power and responsibility should come with some real perks, after all*, Harry mused as he walked down towards the group of homes, where he could see lights on.

Inside, he found Akeno and Yubelluna in one of the houses. Kala was already asleep, splayed out on the bed in the master bedroom snoring away. Harry had worn her out the night before for him, along with Akeno. And thanks to the time dilation, she'd had four days since of hard work with the dwarves at the forge.

Akeno was currently wearing a rather conservative nightshirt, made only sexy because of the body underneath. She was writing some kind of runic array out on a piece of paper, while Yubelluna, who still wore her normal skirt and blouse combo, was working on her violin, getting several of the strings back into tune, as she stared up out of the open window to the moon above. The remains of a meal was laid out on a small table nearby.

Yubelluna saw Harry coming, and both of them greeted him with kisses, with Akeno going so far as to grind herself a little bit against him, then gently tug him into the room. "I take it you're here for the night once more, my lord husband~," She asked huskily.

Like Rias, she was a Devil, and Lust was a very empowering thing for her, regardless of the changes that exchanging vows with Harry had wrought upon her being. And to Akeno, it had been three days since they had last seen one another.

Harry grinned, nodding. "I am, Akeno. In fact, I see no reason why I can't come back here every night." He thought to ask about Hermione and Padma, but he hadn't seen anyone else around as he walked down here, so he decided to leave it for now. He was honestly more tempted to step over into Kuoh and check-in with Rias and Lily than checking on his old friend. Indeed, the only reason he didn't was the time difference between Egypt and Japan was quite severe. Rias would still be asleep this time and getting up in a few hours.

This was indeed the case. Rias, Lily, Kunou and Yasaka were all currently sharing a bed having spent the entire day together shopping and getting their hair done and other 'girly' things that Lily had only somewhat enjoyed. They had however started a Studio Ghibli marathon to finish the night, so both girls had gone to bed happily. As for Rias and Yasaka, they had a large day ahead of them as Rias wanted to start analyzing whatever had been done to the two of them by the mystical remains of Aine Fand. And little girls like Kunou and Lily made for great alarms.

"In that case, I would truly like to make the most of it." So saying, Akeno looked over at Yubelluna, as did Harry, smiling invitingly at her.

But Yubelluna shook her head firmly then picked up her violin and headed towards the door, stepping around Harry and Akeno. "No, thank you, Akeno. I am not going to be sleeping with you, Harry, not anytime soon." She winked at him coquettishly, flashing the ring he had given her. "You still owe me a few dates before we take that step, darling."

Harry laughed and pulled away from Akeno for a second before tugging Yubelluna into his arms, kissing her ear, then down to her collarbone, and around to her mouth. They made out for a few moments, then Harry released her, smiling at her. "I remember, and as soon as we're all back in Kuoh, you'll have those dates."

She smiled at him, kissing him again, before moving away as Akeno joined them, her arms going around Harry from the side. "More for me then." She quipped.

"Be my guest, my dear," Yubelluna laughed as she closed the door behind her.

With Yubelluna gone, Harry turned back to Akeno, lifting her up in a bridal carry, as he kissed her slowly, lovingly on the lips, before depositing her on the bed. Harry then quickly divested himself of his shirt before leaning down, kissing her again on the lips, his hands going to the buttons of her nightshirt. Tonight, Harry was going to forget the troubles in Egypt for a while and just enjoy himself. The rest of the universe could intrude with the sun as it always did.

**OOOOOO**

"Now that is interesting, an entirely new avenue of teleportation! Do you think we'll be able to block that husband of mine?" the woman Kuroka knew as Titi asked.

"Yes, I believe we will! Finally, Harry Potter has made a mistake we can capitalize on!" The man the Khaos Brigade knew as Jason Maagh answered, smiling eagerly before sobering as he stared at the crystal in his hand, showing the splash of the odd magical signal that they had detected in Alexandria. "We might not be able to block him with only a day to work with, though."

Titi paused, thinking. "A day is not enough time for Potter and his allies to hurt us. Even if he can see Deific-level magic, he will still have trouble figuring out what he sees. And if you wish, we can order our followers among the Wizards to start causing trouble before the main event."

"Hmmm... do so, but in moderation," her husband advised. "They are to avoid confronting Potter directly. If his allies split off from him, they become fair game. Even Harry Potter, with his cursed luck, will be hard-pressed to discover what we are up to in a day. And if he cannot, then Potter will be just as trapped within Egypt as everyone else when the Harvest commences."

### **End chapter**

The Hermione segment just ballooned on me, but I honestly think I am happy with how it went down. I didn't want her to become a main character, but she has to start to be involved in the periphery, and this way, I could start to build the Hindu side of things and also cut down the time needed to explain stuff. Beyond that, I have about eight thousand more words written, but the problem is that it would end right before another scene with a big cliffhanger. The kind that goes, 'Little did Harry know that with the dawn would come a change to the world'... kind of thing. Worse I am not satisfied with the second half of those eight thousand words, and if I didn't include it, it would be an even harsher cliffhanger! So I cut it all out and ended the chapter here.

With that decision, though, this story **will** return in the small story poll in March, where I will put it against *Fate Touched*, *ATP*, *Stallion of the Line*, and *Gods Devils and Wild Horses, Oh My*.