

# The Potter

by Bambu

Harry's introspective the morning after the Battle for Hogwarts. There's soup!

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The source material is the property of JKR and her assignees, I'm merely borrowing them for a writing exercise. I'll put them back after I've finished. I promise. Additionally, the introductory quote is from Omar Khayyam's *The Rubaiyat*.

~o0o~

*"Pray tell, then, who is the Potter and who the pot?"*

Hazy sunlight filtered through the windows of the Gryffindor boys' dorm when Harry woke from restless, yet mercifully devoid of nightmares, sleep. He stared at the four-poster's supports and red velvet curtains. It had been his bed for six years, but now it brought him anything but comfort.

*Voldemort is dead.*

I should feel something, Harry thought. Relief, anger, fear, elation -- something other than numbness.

If Hermione had been there as she had been at his side for the past several months she would most likely tell him he was in shock. But she was... Truthfully, Harry hadn't a clue where Hermione was. He hoped she'd found something to eat and somewhere safe enough to sleep.

*Voldemort is dead.*

Ron was probably with his family; later Fred's death would sink in and Harry knew he too would mourn. At the moment, however, he felt disconnected. In the only place he had ever felt at home, he no longer belonged.

*Voldemort is dead.*

Perhaps I'm hungry, he thought, and sat up. The world tilted, and he clenched his fists into the duvet until the dizziness passed. He'd never managed that sandwich, and Hermione would say he'd feel better after he ate. She was usually right.

He glanced at the other beds. None appeared to have been slept in.

Slipping his feet to the stone floor, Harry kicked around until he found his trainers and shoved his feet in the terribly worn shoes. Maybe he could buy some new clothes tomorrow.

*Voldemort is dead.*

He automatically grabbed his wand, his wand, not one of the Hallows and buckled it to his forearm with the broken Muggle watch he'd found sometime during the past week. Then Harry patted his back pocket. The invisibility cloak was still there, shrunk to fit, but irrevocably his possession.

Pulling the filmy cloth from his jeans, he stepped beneath its concealing cover before even considering his actions. For so many months now he, Hermione, and Ron had survived by hiding. It was almost second nature.

Quietly, Harry descended the boys' staircase, passing several dozing students in the common room. He recognized only Seamus and Dean, both sound asleep on a couch in front of the empty fireplace.

*Voldemort is dead.*

Passing through the corridors of the school, Harry eyed the damage wrought on every wall, on every floor of the massive edifice. Hogwarts was buzzing with people: Aurors, Ministry officials, teachers, Poppy Pomfrey frantically dashing down the hall with a basket of clattering vials held in one hand, her other arm pumping as if its impetus could speed her way. Before a vague thought of assistance translated to action, he spied a large group of people climbing the main stairs. He knew none of them, but they were celebrating, laughing and congratulating one another for a job well done.

Harry took the other staircase.

*Voldemort was dead.*

Someone had seen to the Entrance Hall. Hogwarts' massive doors were propped wide open, sunlight poured into the building as if it could sear the pain and misery and betrayal that had played out within the castle's walls. In places, the stone was gouged or blasted into rubble. Patches of the floor were still wet from having the effluvia of death scrubbed from their surfaces.

Harry practically ran past the Great Hall, not knowing if it remained a makeshift morgue and triage unit.

*Voldemort is dead.*

The dungeons were cooler and quieter. Harry passed the entrance to the Slytherin common room, and for once, the door was wide open, the greenish light of the Black Lake speared out into the corridor, a failed *Avada Kedavra* rendered sickly.

One of the last things he had heard was that the entire House had defected to Voldemort, but Harry didn't believe it. He had learned too much over this past year. He had seen Snape's memories. Some Slytherins would have defected while others would have been coerced into participating if only to save their parents and older siblings; there would have been others seizing the opportunity to run or to hide.

Harry paused at the door to his old Potions classroom. Snape hadn't taught there for two years, but as long as Harry lived it would remain Snape's classroom in his mind's eye.

*Voldemort is dead.*

Oddly, the painting he sought along the Hufflepuff corridor was completely unharmed. Harry almost slid to the floor staring at its unblemished surface, but he rallied sufficiently to tickle the fruit. When the painting swung open, Harry was startled by the air of quiet industry in the kitchens.

House-elves were steadily at work.

Two enormous cauldrons hung over an open fire in the enormous walk-in fireplace. A number of house-elves added ingredients and stirred the soup they were making. In one corner, Kreacher tended a small elf, his own head bandaged, giving the wizened old retainer a roguish look.

Suddenly, as if a bell had been rung, all eyes swung in Harry's direction, unerringly alighting on his location, even though he was concealed by one of the Deathly Hallows. Several house-elves shrieked in terror, and Harry quickly pulled his dad's cloak from his shoulders.

"Harry Potter, sir!" Kreacher cried out as he hurried across the cavernous room. "I have avenged my master."

Harry found a smile, but his face felt stiff. "Regulus would be very proud of you, Kreacher."

In the blink of an eye, Harry was surrounded by house-elves, but Kreacher had established his authority and they were quickly cowed into a respectful distance. "How may I help you, young master?"

"Perhaps a sandwich, if it isn't too much trouble."

A small house-elf, whose hands were thickly bandaged appeared at Harry's knee. "If you will come with Daisy, sir."

Harry obediently followed the tiny house-elf to a round table in the corner. She disappeared as soon as Harry sat, and he was left alone as the kitchen returned to pre-interruption activity.

*Voldemort was dead.*

When the painting opened again, Harry fumbled with his cloak until he saw a familiar head of scraggly blonde hair poke into the room. Inexplicably he relaxed. At this point, the only other person who could elicit the same reaction would have been Hermione.

For a fleeting moment, Harry remembered the paintings in Luna's former bedroom.

"Hullo, Harry," she said, closing the painting behind her. "Have you come for the Plimpy soup, too?"

Plimpy soup? Harry goggled at her. "You mean it's real?"

Luna settled into a chair opposite him and nodded at one of the house-elves standing by a cauldron. "It's a house-elf delicacy. Tippy used to make it when Mum was a little girl. Mum taught Daddy the summer before she died. It's always been something of a comfort food in our house."

Harry remembered Xenophilius Lovegood nattering on about Plimpy soup, and suddenly knew Luna's father had been finding solace in whatever way he could. Harry had forgiven the man's betrayal even as Death Eaters had descended upon the house. "Have you heard from your dad?"

"He's still in Azkaban, but he's discovered a thriving community of Jarveys living in empty cells. Apparently the climate is perfect nesting ground. He'll come for me in a few days, and then we'll rebuild our house."

"I'm sorry."

Luna eyed Harry thoughtfully. "I saw the Sistine Chapel once. Mum and I went with Daddy to investigate a sighting of the Minotaur, and we made a bit of a holiday out of it. It's sad people only seem to talk about the painter. The painting is 'Have you seen it?'" When he shook his head, she continued, "It's really quite remarkable. It's where I got the inspiration for my bedroom."

"Did you?" Harry asked.

She nodded. "Mum said people forget paintings have a life of their own. Once complete, the painter is no longer responsible for how his work is received."

Harry shook his head. "Sometimes I don't understand you, Luna."

"That's all right, Harry. You will."

At that moment, two large bowls of soup and a plate of sandwiches appeared in front of them. The soup smelled a little fishy for Harry's tastes, but he picked up his spoon. "Would you mind explaining it to me?"

Luna broke her roll into pieces, dunking a crusty end into the broth. "When Voldemort disappeared the first time, people talked about you. They named things after you -- children, streets, buildings -- but then, after a time, they remembered it wasn't you they were celebrating; it was the end of Voldemort."

Absently Harry chewed a bite of his ham and cheese sandwich. "So ... by next year, no one will care who I am?"

"It may take a little longer this time. You did die."

"Right."

She slurped her soup and bounced one bare foot under the table. They sat in companionable silence for awhile.

"Are you all right, Harry?"

"Yes, Luna, I think I am."

*Voldemort is dead.*

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written 5/08