

You Just Run

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[Complete] One had the picture perfect family, the other barely knew what it meant. One was a model student, the other struggled to learn to read. One was kind, the other sweet, but together one would find his obsession and the other his rage.

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1 - Remembering Yesteryear

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Summary: They weren't actually blood, but they once called each other, "Brother." So what do you do, when the world you once knew starts to fall and there's no where else to run? You do it anyway – *You Just Run*. (Oliver Wood and Marcus Flint)

Chapter One: Remembering Yesteryear

Oliver Wood was stressed as he sat in his office within the Gryffindor locker room. He was preparing for his upcoming game against Slytherin. This game was crucial - vital even - mostly because it was Oliver's last year at Hogwarts, which meant that this was his last chance to win the cup for his House. And he wanted that cup more than he wanted air to breathe, and he knew he would do *anything* to get it.

As he worked on new plays, designed especially to best outwit the opposing team, he could hear the rain as it violently pounded on the roof outside the locker room. He could see the flashes of lightning that for a moment made his small dark office bright as day.

He sighed, he didn't want to admit it, but this was all starting to be too much for him. Oliver placed down his quill before running his hand through his short brown hair as he leaned back in his chair to take a rare moment to relax. He had to stop worrying. Sure the Slytherins would be tough to beat, especially if this weather kept up, but Oliver had faith in his team. He had trained them to play in all kinds of weather. Yes, there was no need to worry. But just as Oliver was in the process of actually starting to feel good about the upcoming game, there came a knock at his door.

He sat up and picked up his quill, mostly out of habit. "Come in," he ordered as he kept his brown eyes on the door. And as it opened, his state of relaxation went flying out of it. "Flint," he greeted the boy with the ear length black hair and ocean blue eyes. "Why are you here?" Oliver got straight to the point.

"Thought I'd find you here. We need to talk," Marcus simply stated as he walked into the office and sat on the opposite side of Oliver.

Oliver gave the boy in front of him a questioning look. "About what?" he asked slowly.

"Quidditch, of course," Marcus answered. "Why else would I seek you out?"

"Just get on with it, Flint." Oliver once again leaned back in his seat as he crossed his arms over his wide chest.

"As you know my seeker was injured awhile back," Marcus began and Oliver nodded. "He has still not recovered from his wounds, so my team is unable to play in the next game." One side of Marcus' mouth curled up. "A shame really, we were having such lovely weather."

Oliver stifled back a yawn before speaking, it was getting late. "Understandable. So what date has our match been rescheduled for?" he asked thinking that this was good news, his team would have more time to prepare.

"Oh no, no dear Wood. I think you misunderstood me," Marcus began playfully. "We can't just simply cancel a match because of one injured player." The smile on his face widened. "You'll still be playing at the same time, it'll just now be against Hufflepuff."

Oliver's mouth dropped open at the news. "What? No, that's not possible. I've been preparing my team to play against you, not Hufflepuff. We should have been told about this change up sooner."

"Aw, yes. That would have been nice for you, huh?" Marcus relaxed in his seat as he crossed his ankle over his knee. "Actually, I was suppose to tell you last week that there would be a change in the lineup if my seeker wasn't better," he shrugged his shoulders, "I guess it just slipped my mind." His smile never faltered. "My apologies."

"You son of a dog," Oliver seethed as he slowly shook his head.

"Hey!" Marcus stood up quickly, knocking his chair down in the process as his fists slammed into the desk. "Watch what you say, Wood."

Oliver looked a bit ashamed as he lowered his head. "You're right, I'm sorry. Your mum's a saint." He then stood up and was eye to eye with Marcus. "But that sure didn't stop her from raising a piece of shoot like you."

"Fine, I can deal with that, but I better never hear you put down the woman who practically raised you. You understand me? Because of the two of us in this room, if anyone's mum was a dog, we sure to hell know it wasn't mine," Marcus explained before turning around to walk out.

"Flint, wait," Oliver called after him and he stopped. "How- how is she?"

Marcus snorted as he turned back to face Oliver. "If you really cared, you would have asked me that a long time ago."

Oliver looked distraught. "Marcus," he said softly. "What happened to us? We used to be so close."

"No the frack you didn't," Marcus yelled in a burst of anger. "How dare you ask me that? Things aren't the way they were before because you. I mean, I don't even recognize you anymore." He marched back over to Oliver's desk. "Dammit! Look at this shoot!" He tossed all of Oliver's papers to the floor and then a few at him. "Look at it!" Oliver took a step back; surprised at the force Marcus threw the pieces of parchment. "This wasn't you!" Marcus pointed back and forth between the two. "This wasn't us!"

Marcus looked angrily at Oliver as he said slowly, "You betrayed me, Wood." Marcus held his head high,

but Oliver could see his face turning red, he knew this was only the tip of Marcus' anger. "I told you to stay away from her and you just couldn't," he explained. "Then there's this." He lifted his arms and made a circle indicating their surroundings. "You love this bloody game, more than anyone who ever loved or cared about you. We were brothers once, but that didn't matter to you, did it?"

"Mar-mar," Oliver began softly.

"Don't! You don't get to call me that anymore," He told him.

"You didn't love her," Oliver told him as he looked into Marcus' blue eyes.

"And you did? Because you did nothing more than use her and then you destroyed her!" Marcus took a deep breath as he calmed himself down. He wasn't going to let Oliver get to him, not today. He then smirked. "You know what? Sometimes I wonder if the Sorting Hat made a mistake when it sorted us."

"Why? What's wrong *Mar-mar*, afraid the other Slytherins will find out you have a heart?" Oliver asked bitterly.

Marcus slowly leaned over the desk towards the brown-headed boy, his breath was hot against Oliver's skin. "Only as much as you fear that your fellow Gryffindors will find out you don't have one at all. But don't you worry, dear Wood, you'll get yours soon enough," he then straightened back up and started walking backwards out of the room. "Because I hear payback is a dog and you're long overdue." Lightning then flashed through the windows showing Oliver the exact intensity behind Marcus' eyes before he slipped out the door, leaving Oliver once again alone in his office.

Oliver sighed as he began to pick up the mess that Marcus had made. As he did this, he began to wonder, was this his fault? Was he really the one that had begun the rip that tore him and his 'brother' apart? Was it his fault that he, himself, didn't know how to care, as Marcus had once put it? No, of course not, Oliver's closed heart, was the fault of one person and one person alone. And her name was Siliva, the woman who had given life to Oliver and nothing more.

FLASHBACK

Oliver was seven years old as he walked through the flat of his home that he shared with his mother. "Mum!" he called for her, but got no answer. He set his backpack by the door and started to walk over to the stairs, which wasn't as easy as it sounded. The floor was litter with trash, dirty dishes, and clothing that hadn't been washed in weeks. Oliver had to maneuver his way around the mess. He then finally reached the bottom of the stairs and began his way up. He traveled down the hall and towards his mother's bedroom. The door was closed and he gently knocked on it before letting himself in. "Mum?" he called, but again there was no response. He sighed heavily as he realized that his mother wasn't home. . . again. She had been gone since he left for school the day before, but Oliver wasn't worry because, for him, this was normal. She would often leave him alone for days on end.

Oliver made his way back down stairs. He looked at the mess around him and thought that maybe if the place was clean when she came back home that maybe she wouldn't leave him alone anymore. So the

little boy with the big brown eyes set off to work. He first picked up the dishes and piled them in the sink to get them out of the way. He then grabbed a couple of garbage bags from under the sink and began picking up the mess in the living room. Placing the trash in one garbage bag and the dirty clothes in the other.

When the garbage bag was full Oliver began to drag it out into the hallway towards the elevator, so that he could take it down to the curve. He pressed the elevator button and waited. When it opened the tallest man Oliver had ever seen stood there. "Going down?" The man asked. Oliver simply nodded and the man held the elevator open as Oliver dragged the bag inside. "Well, aren't you a big boy, already doing chores around the house," he said nothing more as he noticed the little stood with his head down and waited for the door to open.

When they got to the ground floor, the man let Oliver out first and watched as he dragged the bag across the lobby. The man walked up to him. "Would you like some help?" The man offered. Oliver finally looked up at the man and smiled sweetly as nodded.

The man then helped Oliver out to the curve with the trash. "Thank you," Oliver said quickly and began to walk away.

The man looked at the little boy strangely and then called out for him, "Hold on, wait a moment." And Oliver turned back to him. The man squatted to be eye level with the boy. "What's your name?" he asked him.

"Oliver." he said simply.

"Well, it's nice to met you, Oliver," he stuck out his hand for the boy to shake. "I'm Alvin, Alvin Flint." He smiled at him. "I have a little boy about your age. Eight, right?"

"Seven," he corrected him.

"Aw, seven, that's good age." Alvin nodded his head as he rose back up to his feet. He stuck his hands in his robe pockets and looked up at the structure they had just left from. "I'm thinking about moving into this building with my family, but tell me, how do you like it here?" he asked the small boy.

Oliver shrugged. "It's okay. I guess."

Alvin smiled at the little boy before looking at his watch. "Well, it seems that I'm late for an appointment, but it was nice to meet you, Oliver."

Oliver only nodded before rushing back into the building and heading back up to his flat. He closed the door behind him and then headed towards the kitchen where he took one of the chairs from the kitchen table and pushed it over to the sink. He climbed up the chair carefully before running some dishwater to finish cleaning up.

When all the dishes were dried and put away, to the best of his ability, he grabbed his backpack by the door and brought it back to the kitchen table. He sat down and pulled out his work as he tried to ignore the hunger pains in his stomach. It would be no use to look around the flat for food, there was none. So

he would have to wait to eat lunch at school, the only meal he usually ate when his mother would leave him on his own for days.

As he was finishing up his homework he realized there was still the laundry to do. He looked at it, stashed away in a garbage bag, curiously. When his mother did see fit to have them clean, she usually used magic. Sure, Oliver could do magic, but he had only done it on rare occasions and usually on accident.

Oliver smiled as he remembered the first time he had accidentally performed magic. It was about a year back and his mother had been so proud of him. She had picked him up in her arms and spun him around as she laughed joyfully. But then she grew sad as she placed him back on the floor and said as she held him close. "What am I going to do with you, Oliver, hmm? What the hell am I going to do?"

Siliva Wood, wasn't dealt the best hand in life, for it was a life she had dealt herself. She had come from a very respected, pureblood family and she had everything she wanted growing up as child. She was spoiled to say the least. When she was eighteen years old, her parents had told her about the arranged marriage they had set up for her, but had she told them she would not go through with it. That she was already in love with a man named Oliver Card. A man who was seven years older than her, whom she had met the summer after barely graduating from school. She then told them that she was already pregnant with his child.

Her parents were outraged and ordered her to secretly get rid of the child and marry the man they had chosen for her, but she still refused. Her father then gave her an ultimatum, saying that if she didn't do what she was told that she would be disown. Her mother looked at him like he was a fool and told him to take it back, but he was sure that his daughter would give in to him. She always gave a good fight before she did. So he was completely shocked and heartbroken when she once again refused before rushing out of the room in tears to pack her bags and leave the Wood home.

With everything she now owned packed in several suitcases, Siliva went to Oliver Card's flat, the same flat she would share with her son. She told him what happened with her parents and Oliver comforted her. He told her that everything was going to be fine; that he was going to take care of her and their unborn child.

The couple had planned to marry and for a time they were happy, but dark times were brewing as Voldemort was starting to come into his own, gaining powers along with followers with each passing day.

Siliva was seven months pregnant, alone in the flat, when she received an owl that told her Oliver had been found dead. Unknown to her and many others, Voldemort had been after him for recruitment for a long time. When Oliver refused once again, Voldemort finally lost his patience and had Oliver Card killed.

Siliva mourned for many months before her son was born. She named him 'Oliver' after the only man she had ever loved, but Siliva was lost. She was only nineteen, unwed, and had a new baby to support. She didn't know what she was doing. She thought of going back to her family, but she refused to give her two younger sisters the satisfaction of seeing her begging to come home.

Siliva had always been their father's favorite and never once had he tried to hide that fact. So when

Siliva fell off the high pedestal she had been placed upon, her sisters were more than eager to take her place. No, she would not give them the satisfaction.

She would take care of her son on her own. No matter what she had to do.

OoOoO

"Merlin!" Siliva yelled at seven o'clock in the morning as she finally came through the doors of her home carrying, with great difficulty, three bags of groceries. She looked around the flat in surprise as she saw how clean it was. It's not that she saw herself as a bad housekeeper; it's just that some days, she honestly didn't have the time.

"Whoa, let me help you there." Came a man from behind Siliva as one of her bags were slipping.

"Thank you, John." She beamed at him as she continued to the kitchen to set the rest of the bags down.

After John laid his bags to rest he took Siliva in his arms. "So I'll see you in a couple of weeks?" he asked as they swayed back and forth.

"Like always," she told him before placing a kiss on his nose.

"Mama?" Came little Oliver's voice as he rubbed the sleep out of his eye. "Who's he?"

Siliva quickly pulled herself from John and went over to her son. She squatted before him before saying. "He's just one of mama's friends, okay?" Then with both hands she ran her fingers through Oliver's hair. "Boy, we need to do something about this hair of yours."

John then walked up beside the pair. "I have to go, but I'll see later."

Siliva rose back up to meet him. "Of course. You have a good day, okay?" John leant in to kiss her bye, but she pulled away slightly, looking down at Oliver for a moment, before shaking her head. John only nodded and then went on his way. "Are you hungry?" she asked her son.

Oliver held his stomach. "Yes."

"Alright. You go get ready for school and I'll put away these groceries and make you something to eat. How does that sound?" Oliver nodded his head happily, he loved it when his mother was home. "Well, then go on now," she told him and he went running back up the stairs. "Hey! What have I said about running?" She smiled as she knew he wasn't listening.

Siliva then reached for her purse that she had placed on the kitchen table with the groceries. She walked over to the counter near the sink as she pulled out her wand. She said a small spell and the cupboard above her head opened and a blue plastic container settled itself on the counter. It was labeled, 'Oliver's Schooling' as she took off the lid and dumped the money from her purse into it before closing it up and putting it back into its proper place until she had time to drop it off at Gringotts. Because Siliva Wood

would be damned, if her son got into a Wizarding school and she couldn't afford for him to go.

She sighed heavily as she quickly put away the rest of the food and prepared Oliver a couple of eggs and some pancakes. "Oliver, hurry up or you'll be late!"

To Be Continued. . .



2 - Start of the Fall

Chapter Two: The Start of the Fall

Oliver walked home pulling at the straps of his heavy backpack. It was the middle of May and it was nearing the end of the school year. His teacher was piling on the work to make up for things that were supposed to be covered throughout the year.

As Oliver approached his building he saw, what he thought, was a girl, about his age, sitting on the curve tying her shoe. Her hair was black and fell in curls a little past her shoulders, which obscured her face from Oliver's angle. She wore a dark red shirt and blue jean shorts.

She looked up as Oliver passed her and smiled at him. Oliver was a little taken back as he realized the girl he was looking at was actually a boy. "What are you looking at?" The boy's smile quickly fell when he saw the strange look Oliver was giving him.

"Nothing," Oliver said quickly and walked faster into the building. Soon Oliver walked into the doors of his home and found once again that his mother wasn't home. He immediately took his backpack to the kitchen table and began his homework of Spelling and Mathematics. He had trouble with subtracting, but it didn't take him long to figure it out. After the worksheet was completed, he decided it was time for a break.

He went over to the refrigerator and grabbed an apple. He ate it as he went upstairs to his bedroom. He grabbed an orange ball with odd spaced black lines. His mother had told him it was a Muggle toy called a 'biscuit ball' or something or other. She had tried to explain the game to him once before, but he didn't quite understand. Although the biscuit ball was pretty fun to bounce or roll around in the playground located behind the building.

Before long Oliver was outside, throwing the ball against the wall of the brick building and catching it, only to throw it at the wall again. It was a simple game, but he enjoyed it. He had been at it for a while when he heard a voice. "What are you doing?" Oliver was spooked by the sudden disturbance and the ball he had just thrown came back only to hit him in the head, thus, knocking him down on his butt. "Ow. That had to hurt." Oliver only rubbed his head as the boy he had seen earlier came over to help him up. "You okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Oliver said as he stood. "Thanks."

"No problem," said the boy. "So um- what's that?" He pointed to Oliver's ball.

"Oh, it's called a biscuit ball," he shrugged. "I think."

"It's ugly," the boy commented as he nodded his head, as if agreeing with himself.

"Yeah, I know," Oliver said as he picked up the ball with both hands. "What are you up to?" He pointed his head to the broom in the other boy's hand.

"Oh, this?" The boy beamed happily at his broom. "It's my sister's, Chelsie. She's going to give me a riding lesson."

Oliver was intrigued. "Cool! Can I watch?"

"Sure, I don't care," he said as he made a face. "I'm Marcus, by the way."

"Oliver."

"Mar-Mar!" A girl's voice could be heard from inside the building. "Mar-Mar!"

"Uh-oh!" Marcus' eyes grew wide. "Hide!" He grabbed Oliver's sleeve and dragged him with him behind some nearby bushes.

"Why are-" Oliver began.

"Shh!" Marcus interrupted him as a teenage girl, about fifteen, with long dark brown hair came out of the building calling out. "That's my sister," Marcus whispered.

"Then why are we hiding?" Oliver whispered back.

"Because I stole her broom from her room."

Oliver looked at him curiously. "I thought you said she was going to give you a lesson."

"She is," he paused. "She just doesn't know it yet. Duck!" He pushed Oliver closer to the ground as Chelsie drew closer.

"Where are you, you troll? I know you're out here!" She looked around the playground. "Don't make me tell mum!"

"Merlin." Marcus started to stand, revealing his hiding place and so Oliver stood with him.

"There you are," Chelsie marched over to the pair of boys. "Hand it over, mister." She held out her hand. "And there better not be a straw out of place."

"Aw, Chels," he said as he slowly handed over the broom. "I only took it because I wanted you to play with me," he said sadly. "I only get to see you when you're home for the summer and-" his bottom lip began to quiver as he looked up at his sister with big puppy dog eyes, "-and I miss you when you're away." He quickly looked to Oliver and winked.

"Okay, Mar-mar," Chelsie breathed as she ran her fingers through her brother's long dark hair. "I miss you too, but that doesn't give you the right to go in my room and to take my things."

"I'm sorry," he lowered his head. "I was only trying to get your attention."

"Never bow your head," she lifted his chin. "Not even to me. But more importantly, never apologize for what you want. You'll do best to remember that, alright?" He nodded his head. She then looked at her broom. "I'm guessing you want a lesson?"

He smiled a wild, goofy smile. "Maybe."

"If I agree to give you lessons, what's in it for me?" she asked.

Marcus looked at her suspiciously with narrow eyes. "What do you want?" It was now his sister's turn to smile like a fool. Marcus shook his head. "No."

"Yes."

"Not happening."

"Then no lessons." She began to walk away.

"Okay, stop." He took a step forward. "I'll do it," he pouted. He then pointed his finger at her and yelled, "But no pictures this time!"

Chelsie looked over her shoulder, she gave his request a thought for a moment. "One roll," she finally responded, turning around and putting a hand on her hip.

"No," Marcus shook his head. "I'll give you six shots," he offered. Oliver looked at the siblings strangely as they seem to be working out some type of business deal.

"That's not enough. I'm going to need at least a baker's dozens," she countered. "And not a shot lower or the deals off."

Marcus made a face. "Fine," he gritted out.

Chelsie turned around, feeling she had gotten the best of her little brother. "Nice doing business with you." She smiled before being to walk towards the door back into the building. "Now come on inside and wash up for dinner."

"Okay. Can I say bye to Oliver first?" he asked.

"Sure, but don't take long," she told him before stepped inside, broom in hand.

As soon as she was out of sight, Marcus turned to Oliver. "No need for applause." He gave a small bow. "I know I'm good." He grinned from ear to ear. "See, told you I'd get a lesson out of her."

"Yeah," Oliver drawled. "But to get the lesson now you have to do something you don't want."

"Now see, that's where you're wrong," Marcus began. "I only made her think that. That way when I did

want something from her, it would be a trade on my terms."

"So you tricked her? Isn't that wrong?" Oliver asked.

"I didn't trick her," Marcus defended himself. "Only out strategized her."

"Okay, but why do you want lessons so badly?" he asked. "You'll learn once you start at a Wizarding school."

"I know, I just want to be prepared for when I try out for Quidditch," he explained before saying proudly. "Chelsie's a Quidditch player at school. Best of all the teams."

"Really?" Oliver asked as the two started to walk inside.

"Hell yeah," Marcus said excitedly. "Mum, dad, and me were able to attend a few of her games this year." He pressed the up button on the elevator. "They were zooming through the air and trying to knock the other team players off their brooms. It was awesome!" he almost yelled. "So I've decided I'm going to go to the same school and be a Quidditch player, just like my sister."

"I don't know." Oliver shook his head as they stepped onto the elevator and pushed his floor. "What floor?" he asked Marcus.

"The same," he told him. "And you don't know about what?"

"About Quidditch," he began. "it seems kind of violent."

"Yeah, a little," Marcus admitted as his mind recovered a memory and he grew a little pale. "It was kind of scary when one of the players went down during the last game. I think she broke something, because she just started screaming when she hit the ground." He was silent for a moment as he lowered his head. "But she was fine after seeing the school nurse." His smile returned as he looked at Oliver. "Chels says the nurse is really good. That she's able to fix anything."

"You know, if you're trying to get someone to like the game, you may want to skip the part about the broken bones," Oliver smiled as the elevator doors open and they stepped out.

"Eh," Marcus only shrugged. "I'm this way," he pointed down the hall. "How about you?"

"Down this hall," Oliver pointed in the opposite direction.

"Okay, cool. Maybe I'll see you tomorrow then?" Marcus asked. "Me and my family just moved to the building and you're the first kid I've seen around here."

"Yeah, it'll be fun," Oliver told him as he smiled.

"Marcus!" A strong voice said from down the hall. It was Alvin Flint, who was now approaching the pair. "Hello, Oliver." He nodded towards the boy as he put both of his hands on his son's shoulders.

"Hello, Mr. Flint," he greeted him.

Marcus tilted his head back to look at his father. "Marcus, your mother is about to have a fit, if you don't hurry and clean up for dinner."

"Sorry, I was just talking to my new friend."

"Yes, I see." He looked back at Oliver for a moment. "I'm glad you've made friends so quickly, but come now before dinner gets cold." He let go of his son and started back toward his new home.

"I got to go. See you tomorrow," Marcus said quickly and followed his father.

"Bye," Oliver called after him and then turned around to head home himself. He yawned as he entered the door. He then went to finish up the rest of his homework before fixing himself a sandwich and heading upstairs for a bath. After his bath, he climbed into his bed and curled himself into a ball before peacefully falling asleep. As he did, he wondered where his mother was and when she would be home.

OoOoO

"Come on now, just sit back and relax," said the slow, smooth voice of a man. "You'll like it, I swear."

"I don't know," the woman shook her head. "I'm not exactly sure what it is and I don't like the looks of it. Besides, our business for the day is concluded. I should be heading out now."

"Why? What's wrong, Siliva? Don't you trust me?" he asked.

"Well," she debated. "Yes, of course I do."

"Good. Now like I said before: Sit. Relax." Siliva then sat down next to the man. "Don't pretend you're not curious," he told her.

"Well, if you know I'm curious, just go on and tell me what it is," she requested.

"Just something I've discovered in my travels among the Muggles. Now like I said before, you'll like it. I wouldn't offer it, if I didn't think you wouldn't," he explained. "Besides, you're always so stressed and worried about so many things every time I see you. And I just want to see you let go and enjoy life every once in awhile."

She snorted as she shook her head. "I don't have time to enjoy life."

"That's a shame." He looked at her with pity. "But give me this moment and I can change that."

"With this white powder?" She looked at him and then it in disbelief. "I don't understand. There's something more to this, isn't there?"

"No, not at all," he tried to explain. "It is a little overpowering at first, but then you settle into it and the world just seems to float away." He shrugged, "At least for a small time." He then turned to her, his glossy eyes looking into hers. "And wouldn't you like to escape?" He ran his fingers gently across her face. "If only for a little while?"

Siliva reached for his hand and slowly took it away from her face. She then sighed. "I should really get going. I wasn't supposed to be here this long." She stood up and gathered herself.

But before she reached the door, the man's voice called out for her, "What if I told you, I can get you what you need."

"You don't know what I need," she said with her back to him.

"Do you honestly think I don't know about the boy?" He laughed. "If you didn't, you surely don't know who you are dealing with when it comes to me."

"Then if you know I have a son, why do you keep me here for days?" she asked as she turned back towards him.

"No, no, no. The question is: why do you stay?"

"There is only one reason I stay and one reason alone. Nothing more and you know that," she told him. "I do what I do for my son."

"And you will continue to do that. But tell me, how much harder will it be on you, if I dropped out? Can you afford that?"

"You wouldn't," she whispered.

He smirked. "I would, because I can always get someone else to satisfy my," he took a breath, "needs. But you on the other hand." He tilted his head to the side. "How many would you have to pick up, to equal me?"

Siliva closed her eyes for a moment as she hugged herself. "Fine," she finally spoke before she walked back over and sat down next to him, visibly upset by his threat. "What do you need me to do?"

"Nothing more than relax," he told her again as a smile slowly donned his features.

To Be Continued. . .

3 - A Cat's Duty

Chapter Three: A Cat's Duty

It was the last day of the second grade for Oliver, and Siliva waited for him at home in the kitchen. She was cutting up tomatoes and lettuces for tacos as she talked with her friend John, who sat at the table behind her. "So, did he take the bait?"

"Hook, line and sinker," Siliva told him. "Just like they all do. . . but John, we may have a slight problem."

"What is it?" he asked as he shooed away a fly.

"I think my cover has been blown," she explained. "He knows my name isn't Siliva Carter and he knows about Oliver." She turned around to face John as she leaned on the counter, her knife still in hand.

"Which means he knows where I live. "

"Fine, then do your job and take him out. We have all the information we're going to get from him anyway."

"That's what I'm saying, I don't think I can. If he has told anyone else who I am, which I'm sure he has, and he ends up dead, I'm going to be on the top the suspect list. I can't put my Oliver in danger like that or the Gatoos Organization."

"Listen Siliva, I'm telling you, just do your job and don't worry about the consequences of your actions. Remember, we Gatoos take care of our own."

"And what if you can't? What in the world am I suppose to tell my son if we have to pick up and move? What am I suppose to tell him if we have to change are names and more than likely live among the Muggles? He won't understand that."

"Have you no faith in the Organization that sees you as their prized assassin?" John asked as the fly landed on his forehead and he brushed it away.

"I only joined so that I could kill the Death Eater that You-Know-Who ordered to kill my fiancé. And once I've done that and have earned enough money for Oliver's schooling, I'm leaving the Gatoos. The Organization has known that from the very beginning, I made my goals very clear."

"Yes, of course. And you were told that once that information was available, you would be the first to have it. Patience is a virtue Siliva, so trust the Organization and if not them," he shook his head, "trust me." He then said softly, "You know I wouldn't let anything happen to you or your son."

"That's sweet of you." She turned back around to continue her cooking. "But I want my next assignments by the end of the week."

"So soon?"

"I don't dilly-dolly with my jobs like you, John. Besides, if I have to pretend to be a call girl for that man any longer, and have him touch me again, I may have to kill you for handing me over such an assignment."

"Hey," John threw his hands up as if surrendering. "Don't kill the messenger. . . so to speak." He smiled. "If you came in to pick up your own assignments you may have a choice in the matter."

"No, I don't like picking out the people I have to kill. It bothers me," she explained.

John looked at her in disbelief. "Yet, you take a demonic pleasure in seeing how many ways you can cut a person up without making a mess."

"Thirty-seven." She smiled. "I can cut up a person thirty-seven ways with minimum blood splatter. Besides, you know very well, using your wand is too risky in our line of work. Because if you're caught, the first thing the Ministry does is check your wand to see what was the last few spells you cast."

"Yes, I know. Do you forget I also work for the Ministry."

"Aw, yes." She turned and walked over to the refrigerator where she pulled out a jar of salsa. "Our little insider to help us out if any of us Gatoos are dumb enough to get caught." She turned to John. "Getting caught by the Ministry is the least of my worries." She walked back over to the counter and poured the salsa into a bowl. "You should leave soon. Oliver will be getting home soon and I don't want him to get accustomed to your face."

"Why? You ashamed of me or something?" John asked seriously as the fly was once again flying around his head.

"No, nothing like that." She justified, "Oliver is a very smart boy and I don't want him to figure anything out before I'm able to explain to him why I do what I do."

"No," he shook his head. "What you don't want him to know, is that you may be capable of loving another man other than his father."

Siliva paused at his words. "You don't know what you are talking about."

"You don't have to be afraid to fall in love again, Siliva. Oliver won't hate you for it."

Siliva huffed loudly as she picked up her kitchen knife before turning around and throwing it in the direction of John. John stayed completely still as the knife passed by his head and struck the wall behind him. "Don't patronize me, John."

John turned his head slightly to look at the knife beside his head. "You're losing your touch, Wood," he said with a smile.

"I wouldn't say that." Her eyes stared at the knife and so John completely turned his head to look at it. Pinned to the wall was the fly that had been bothering him earlier. "Now please, my son will be home any moment."

John was about to say something, but stopped as a concerned look filtered onto his face. "Siliva, your nose, it's bleeding."

"What?" Siliva brought the back of her hand up to her nose and sure enough she was bleeding. "No, need for alarm. I have wicked allergies during the beginning of summers. Been that way since I was a child." With the back of her hand still to her nose, Siliva turned off the heat to her ground beef before going over and taking the knife out of the wall. She then excused herself as John fixed the small whole with his wand. "See yourself out, John. I'll see you next week."

OoOoO

Oliver stepped off the elevator to his floor as a blonde headed man stepped on. Oliver recognized him from a few weeks ago, he was his mother's friend, but Oliver didn't say anything as he passed him, mostly because he didn't like the looks of him. Oliver had seen his mother kiss this guy and though he didn't like it, Oliver never voiced it out loud.

As Oliver was continuing down the hall towards his flat, he heard someone call out for him. "Ollie!" It was Marcus and Oliver happily turned around. "Want to come over and play?" he asked.

"Yeah," Oliver answered as he started walking towards Marcus.

Marcus looked at him curiously. "Don't you have to ask your mum or something?"

"Oh." Oliver raised both eyebrows. He hadn't even thought about that because she was absent so often. But his mother had told him that people weren't supposed to know how often he was home by himself. Oliver didn't know why, he thought he took care of himself well while she was away. "Yeah, I'll go ask now," he told Marcus and once again headed towards his flat. He was only going to wait inside for a minute before coming back out and saying that he had permission.

When he opened the door, the smell of tacos immediately entered his nose. "Mum?" he called half expecting not to hear her call back.

"I'm upstairs, Oliver. I'll be down in a moment," she told him as he put down his empty backpack by the door. It wasn't everyday that she was actually home when he came back from school. And as he followed his nose to the kitchen the thought of Marcus entirely slipped his mind.

A few moments later, Siliva came downstairs and went into the kitchen. She had come down prepared to fix a plate for Oliver, but was surprised that he had already fixed himself one and was already eating at the table. Sometimes Siliva forgot how independent he had become since she had joined the Gatoo Organization. She walked over to him and pushed his bang away from his forehead before giving him a kiss. "We can't put it off any longer, dear. A haircut after dinner, okay?"

Oliver only nodded because his mouth was full of food. She smiled as she walked over and fixed herself a plate, before sitting at the table to join her son. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Can I go play at Marcus' after my haircut?" he asked.

"Who's Marcus?" she asked him.

"He's my friend. Him and his family just moved into building a few weeks ago," he explained to her. "He's really nice, mama. I like him."

Siliva looked at her happy boy's face. "Alright, it's okay with me. Just make sure you don't outstay your welcome."

"Of course," he agreed as he continued to eat. When he was finished he put his plate in the sink and waited for his mother to cut his hair. As he sat and watched his brown locks fall to the floor by his mother's wand, he spoke. "Is it okay if I change my mind?" he asked her near the end of his haircut.

"Change your mind about what, dear?"

"About going over to Marcus'."

"But I thought you said you liked him."

"I do, but I don't want to come back only to find you gone," he admitted quietly.

Siliva stopped what she was doing and looked at her son. "Run and play, Oliver," she told him softly. "I'll be here when you come back." He looked up at her. "And I'll tuck you in when it's time for bed and I'll read you a story. Would you like that?" He nodded. "Then run and play."

He smiled at her before hopping out his chair and heading to his friend's place. He knocked on the door and was greeted by a warm smile. "Hello there, Ollie," said the voice. "Come on in. Marcus is in his room."

"Thank you, Mrs. Flint," Oliver told the woman with the hay-colored hair before heading to Marcus' room. "Hey," he said happily as he looked at his friend sitting on the floor.

"What took you so long?" Marcus demanded. "I thought you weren't coming."

"I had to eat dinner and-" He was cut off.

"Get a dorky haircut?" Marcus cocked an eyebrow as he chuckled.

"Yeah, that too," Oliver said as he ran his fingers through his freshly chopped off hair before sitting down in front of a peculiar three-foot-long rectangular box with a slit on each side. "What are you doing?"

"It's a game Chelsie gave me for my last birthday. Here." Marcus handed him over a flat board with pieces of designed parchment on it. The parchment had the layout of a Quidditch field on it. He then handed him a small thing of ink and a quill. "It's a strategy game," he explained. "You mark game plays

and put them on the special paper. When you're done with that you put them into here," he pointed to the rectangular box, "and it plays out the game for you. It's fun," he told him.

"It's stupid," Oliver told him. "I don't like Quidditch."

"Just play," Marcus told him.

"Why can't we just play outside?" Oliver asked him.

Marcus looked at him with a sour face. "We did what you wanted to do last time," he told him. "And I didn't say anything about that stupid, ugly biscuit ball."

Oliver huffed, Marcus was right, usually they did what he wanted to do and that wasn't fair for Marcus. Besides, Oliver wanted to be a good friend, considering Marcus was the only one he really had and he didn't want to lose him over something this silly. "Fine." He picked up the quill and started marking the parchment, though he had no idea what he was doing, but he was too upset to ask Marcus for help.

"What are you guys doing?" The boys looked up and saw Chelsie standing in the doorway.

"Playing Quidditch," they both answered at the same time, but their tones were dramatically different.

"You want some help, Ollie?" she asked the distraught looking boy.

"Hey, what about me?" Marcus asked jealously.

"I've already taught you how to play. And knowing you, you probably didn't even tell the poor boy how to mark the plays." Marcus only smiled at his sister. "Just what I thought," she shook her head. "You troll."

"Stop calling me that." Marcus pouted as Chelsie laid lengthwise behind Oliver as she leaned her head on one hand and pointed a few things out to Oliver with the other before replying to Marcus by sticking her tongue out at him. Marcus countered by giving her an offensive gesture with his hand before going back to the matter at hand.

"No fair!" Marcus yelled at Oliver and Chelsie after a few minutes of watching their players play on the hologram like device. "You cheated!" he yelled once more.

Oliver and Chelsie only laughed. "We didn't cheat," Chelsie told her little brother. "And if we did, it's only cheating," she pointed to the official on the field, "if you get caught." She winked at him and he joined in on the laughter.

"But isn't cheating wrong?" Oliver asked and the Flint children just looked at him.

"Oi," Chelsie sat up. "A lot of work to do on this one," she said looking at her brother before turning to Oliver. "How do you plan on playing Quidditch, if you aren't willing to bend the rules in your favor?" she asked him.

"I don't plan on playing Quidditch. It's stupid."

Chelsie brought her hand up to her chest and gasped in mock shock before laughing. "You know, with that kind of attitude, you'll never beat Marcus on your own." She stood up. "I've taught him almost everything I know and he's good." Marcus sat up straight and gave Oliver a harsh smirk as he held his head high.

Oliver looked over at his friend and in that instant decided he didn't like that overconfident, egotistical look. It was that moment he had pledged to knock it off his face. "If I learned this game, the fair way," he stared defiantly into Marcus's blue eyes as he spoke to Chelsie, "I'm sure I could wipe the floor with him any day of the week."

"Is that a challenge, Wood?" Marcus asked excitedly.

Oliver looked at the game before them and then looked back up at Marcus before saying with straight face as he shook his head. "No."

Chelsie laughed as Marcus yelled, "You suck!" And threw his game play board at Oliver, which he easily caught before giving Marcus a smirk of his own.

OoOoO

It was early in the morning when there came a knock on the door of the Wood home. "I'm coming, I'm coming," Siliva said groggily as she tied her housecoat around herself heading down the stairs. She pushed back her hair before opening the door to see who it could be. "John?" She brought her hand to her mouth and yawned. "What are you doing here?"

"You're next assignments." He handed her over a plain white envelope. "Sorry to have come so early, but I have other things to do today."

"I see," she began. "Do you have time for a short visit?" she asked as she opened her door wide.

"You're not afraid of Oliver seeing me?" he asked.

"He's spending the nights at a friend's," she told him and he walked inside as she closed the door behind him. As he walked over to the couch to sit down, Siliva opened the envelope to see her new assignments. John stared at her as she stared at her assignments. "You're not pleased," he stated.

"That's not it." She shook her head. "You know the concerns I had about my last assignment. Did the Head Gatoos honestly think this one was wise?" she asked as she sat down next to him and handed him the assignment card of her next victim.

"You're in the perfect position to get close, find out information, and to take him out," John explained.

"I don't know. This one worries me," she told him.

"He's a Death Eater, Siliva, just like them all, and the Ministry is doing nothing. They don't even think Death Eaters are a threat anymore since the disappearance of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. But we know better, don't we Siliva?"

Siliva held her head down and softly replied, "Yes."

John sighed; he didn't like seeing her like this. "But if it honestly bothers you, I'll go back and get you a new assignment."

"No," her head snapped up and she grabbed the card from his hand. "No." She once again stared at the cards in hands. "When you go back to the Head Gatoos, you can tell them that Jason Conaway and Alvin Flint are as good as dead."

To Be Continued. . .

4 - The Flints

Chapter Four: The Flints

Alvin Flint yawned as he stretched in the comfort of his own bed and as he did so his curly haired, blonde wife nestled into him. He wrapped his arms around her before resting his chin on top of her head. They had been married for over nineteen years, yet Alvin never tired of waking up to her every morning. Her name was Gale; she was the love of his life, the mother of his children, and he would have done anything for them and sadly, he had.

The day ranged very clear within Alvin's mind. It had been mid August -- August 18, 1978 to be exact and they were celebrating Chelsie's tenth birthday. She was opening up her last present for the evening, which had been a certificate for flying lessons for an entire year, when the front door of their countryside home came barreling open. Gale screamed before rushing to pick up a three-year-old Marcus. Chelsie clung to her father, who was standing nearby, but he told her to go to her mother.

A small group of Death Eaters, of about seven or eight, came leisurely into the house and approached the Flint family. "Alvin Flint, I presume," came a female voice from behind one of the masks. It was a voice Alvin did not recognize, but it would soon be one he would never forget.

"What is your business here?" Alvin asked as he stood in front of his family.

"Today is your lucky day," the female began. "You have been chosen by our Dark Lord, to be one of us. To be one of the chosen few to serve by his side as he rises into power. And as he rises, those that are most loyal to him will as well," she paused and tilted her head to one side. "But you've heard all of this before, haven't you, Flint? You know what he can offer you. So recognize this opportunity, accept your fate and come with us willingly."

"Alvin, what is she talking about?" Gale asked, but she went ignored.

"My answer is the same as before. I don't need to think about it. I will not come with you and I will not join him," he stated boldly. "Now get out of my home."

"I'm sorry, but you no longer have the luxury of time, Flint." The woman smiled behind her mask. "This will be the last time we will extend this offer."

"Good. Now out." Alvin looked at all the intruders; he knew if forced, he would not be able to take on this many, even with Gale's help, not with their children so close by.

"Amusing, but I don't think you have fully grasped this situation," she spoke as two Death Eaters seized Alvin in the blink of an eye.

"Daddy!" Chelsie shouted and yanked herself from her mother's holds.

“Chelsie, no!” Gale yelled as she unsuccessfully tried to pull her back.

Chelsie attached herself to her father as she stared with narrowed eyes towards the female Death Eater. “You heard my dad. Get out!” she demanded.

“Chelsie, go back to your mother,” Alvin told her. Marcus didn’t really know what was going on, but knew that everyone seemed upset and so started to cry.

“Foolish girl,” another Death Eater, a male, spoke as he walked passed the one who had been speaking and grabbed a shrieking Chelsie by the hair.

“Leave her alone,” Alvin struggled against the men holding him. “She’s only a child!”

“Listen up and listen well,” he began as he picked up Chelsie, who fussed and yelled at him until he put his wand to her throat. “I don’t care if she is an only child, I’m bored. It’s been two days since I’ve killed someone and I’m getting that itch again,” he explained as he looked around. “You have no choice in this matter. You will leave with us right now, and you will join our ranks or this pretty little girl of yours won’t live to see her next birthday.”

Alvin looked at his wide-eyed, frightened daughter as she heard the threat. Alvin then closed his eyes and bowed his head. “I’ll do whatever you want. Just leave my family out of this,” he said in a quiet voice.

Chelsie was dropped rudely to the floor before she rushed back to her father. “Daddy, don’t go,” she begged him. “I don’t like these people.”

“Chelsie, come to me,” Gale called to her, but Chelsie wasn’t listening. “Damnit, now,” she called in a frustrated whisper, but the girl did not move.

“Ahh!” Chelsie yelled as the man who had been holding her smacked her.

“You should be an obedient child and listen to your mother,” he told her as she lay on the floor holding her face.

“You bastard!” Gale couldn’t hold her temper any longer. These people had come into her home uninvited, held her husband at bay, and then had the audacity to hit her first born in front of her. Gale had never been the kind to take things lying down, and so she punched the man who had struck her child, while Marcus still rested firmly on her hip.

Without hesitation, the female Death Eater raised her wand. “*Crucio!*” she yelled, sending Gale crumbling to her knees. Gale dropped Marcus in the progress so he would not be hit by the curse, as she tried her best to hold in her screams of pain. Chelsie pushed away tears as she could do nothing more than go over and hold her brother helplessly. “Lay your hands on my husband again and I’ll kill you,” the Death Eater told Gale as she lowered her wand. Alvin said nothing as his face grew contorted in anger. He could only hold his tongue; he didn’t want to give them another excuse to harm his family. He then promised himself that one day they would pay for this; he didn’t know how, but they would

surely pay.

“Hell of a left jab you have there,” the man spoke as his hand went up to his mask and felt the crack that had been made there. He then turned to his wife. “Our business here is done. We have what we came for, let’s go.” He turned around and walked towards the door as the others closely followed him. As Alvin was dragged out of his home, the last scene he saw of his family was his wife, who was still on all fours as his small children clung to her, hoping that she would be all right.

That had been years ago, but Alvin still dreamt about it as if it had happened yesterday. It had scared his daughter completely. After that day, she refused to celebrate her birthday, saying she didn’t want to remember the day her father became one of the bad people. It broke Alvin’s heart.

He sighed heavily as his hand drew up into a fist. He raised his left arm and began to stare at it. It had been unblemished for a few years now. He then saw Gale’s fingers wrap around his arm and push it back down. “I really wish I didn’t have to wake up to find you staring at your arm every morning.”

“I can’t help it,” he confessed. “I’m afraid that one day I’ll wake up and it’ll be there.”

“You-Know-Who is gone. We are living in peaceful times,” she tried to reassure him.

“Yes, but for how long, Gale?” He sat up, pushing his wife off him. “I know he’s still out there,” he once again looked at his arm. “It’s like I can feel him. It’s faint, but it’s there.”

Gale wrapped her arms around him and kissed his shoulder. “Please Alvin; just put it out of your mind. It’s the only way you will ever find peace.”

Alvin turned his head towards her and smiled. He then kissed her forehead before asking, “Did you sleep well?”

“No,” she admitted as she pulled away. “It’s been two days and no one has come for Oliver.” She got out of bed and found her housecoat. “I mean, what kind of mother leaves a child so young on their own for that long?” she asked, but only got a shrug out of Alvin. “I think it’s about time we report her to the Ministry for child neglect.” She grew upset. “I just shudder to think what would have happened to him if he hadn’t come to us right away.”

“You’re right.” Alvin got out of bed. “We’ve put it off long enough. I’ll head out early and go there before I head to work.” Flint worked at the Daily Prophet. His job had been clear from the beginning, which was to downplay any activity ordered by the Dark Lord. He wasn’t the editor, but he might as well been, for the editor often asked for Alvin’s help. It had soon become clear to him, that the editor actually had no idea what he was doing and so Alvin practically ran the place from behind the lines.

“Good,” Gale responded. “I’m going to wake up the children. What do you want for breakfast?” she asked as she headed towards the door.

“French toast, eggs, bacon, and orange juice if we have it.”

“What? Cereal?” She walked out the door.

Alvin frowned as he said loud enough for her to hear down the hall, "Then why ask me, woman?"

Gale went to her daughter's room. "Chelsie, get up and fix breakfast for the family." Chelsie only groaned loudly as she shifted in her bed. "Now, Missy," she warned before heading to Marcus' room. She leaned on the doorway as she looked in on the two boys. Oliver had been with them for two nights now. They had conjured up another bed for him to sleep in, but the boys had pushed them together and slept in the middle.

Gale smiled sadly, as she saw how her son slept with his arm around Oliver, as if he was trying to protect him somehow. Gale couldn't blame him though; she had come to adore that little boy over the summer months. She also had to admit, it was nice having another child in the house. She then unconsciously rested her hand on her stomach. It *almost* made up for the one she would never have, the one that had been stolen from her, along with her husband's peace of mind those years ago.

She never even had the chance to tell Alvin she was pregnant. She had only found out that morning of Chelsie's tenth birthday and didn't think it proper to announce the coming of another child during the celebration of the birth of another. Gale blamed herself for the lost of their child. *If only I had held my temper*, she would often think. And although she knew Alvin would never blame her, she just couldn't bring herself to tell him. She didn't want him to have a void in his heart that could never be filled, as she had.

"I honestly wish he would stop that," Alvin spoke as he came up from behind and wrapped his arms around her. He then rested his chin on her shoulder.

"Stop what?" She tilted her head to rest on his.

"His thumb sucking," Alvin answered referring to Marcus.

Gale sighed. "He only does it in his sleep when he's upset. I doubt he knows he does it."

"It's still a bad habit," he argued before asking. "I thought you were going to wake them up?" Alvin then frowned as something touched his face. "Gale? Are you crying?" He slightly pulled away to look at her.

"What? No," she answered. "My eyes are just watery this morning." She then smiled at him, hoping he believed her lie. She then turned back towards the boys. "How could she not come for him by now?" She thought aloud. Alvin once again only shrugged as he shook his head.

Oliver had come to them two nights ago. Alvin had already gone to bed for the night and Chelsie was in the living room, taking a break from the homework she had to complete before she began her fifth year at Hogwarts. She laid lengthwise on the couch with her back on the armrest as Marcus rested in between her legs reading a book aloud to her. "Sound it out, Mar-Mar," she encouraged him as he struggled through the words. Though he had passed to the fourth grade, his reading and comprehension skills were not up to par.

There then came an urgent sounding knock at the door as Gale cleared the table with her wand and had the dishes float over to the sink to be washed. The knocking became louder as she walked over to the

door. Chelsie and Marcus stopped what they were doing as they wondered who their visitor could be. Gale opened the door cautiously and gasped at the sight before her. "Mum?" Chelsie sat up when she saw her mother lower herself to her knees.

She and Marcus stood up and quickly went to the door to fully swing it open. Both of their eyes grew wide as they saw Oliver at the door, his front side completely covered in blood. "I- I- I can't get it to stop," he cried as he held his left hand in a fist close to his chest as his other hand gripped his wrist tightly. "It hurts." He grew pale as tears rushed from his eyes and down his cheeks.

Gale tenderly reached out for his arm and as her skin met his, he recoiled in the pain. "Come on, honey, you have to let me see it." Oliver whimpered as he obeyed. "Merlin," Gale whispered as the large, deep gash came into her view. It went from his wrist on up to the parting between his middle and ring finger.

"What happened, Ollie?" Marcus asked as tears started to flow from his eyes as he saw his best friend in pain.

"I tripped and broke the glass in my hand," Oliver explained.

"Where's your mom, Oliver?" Gale asked him, but instead of answering, he just looked back down at his wound and began to cry again.

"I'll go check on her, mum," Chelsie suggested and slipped passed the two and ran down the hall as she followed the trail of blood.

"Marcus," Gale turned to her son. "Wake your father." Marcus nodded and ran down the hall and up the stairs. "Come on, baby. Let's get you inside." Gale easily picked him up, he was such a frail boy for his age, and as she walked over to the kitchen, blood ran down her clothes and some splattered onto the floor.

"Gale, what's going on?" Alvin asked as his son accompanied him into the kitchen. He then saw the terrified looking boy sitting down. "What happened?" His brow furrowed in confusion.

"He cut himself," she told him as she grabbed a towel from a drawer and wrapped it around Oliver's wrist and hand.

"Mum!" Chelsie called from the front door.

"The kitchen!" she yelled back.

"There's no one over there," Chelsie explained. "He was by himself."

"What?" Gale looked at her daughter in astonishment before turning back to Oliver. "Were you alone, Ollie?" she asked him gently and he gave her a small nod. She sighed and looked to Alvin. "I'm taking him to St. Mungo's." Alvin readily agreed as he saw his wife pick up the child and Apparate.

"Dad, is he going to be okay?" his son asked him, but Alvin found he was unable to give him an answer, so he only smiled softly before picking him up. "It's late. You should be in bed." He then looked to his

daughter. "You too."

Chelsie bit her nails nervously. "I want to stay up until mum gets back."

"No," he shook his head. "Upstairs."

"But dad-

"Don't argument with me, Chelsie."

"Yes, sir," she replied and headed towards the living room to gather their books and then headed upstairs as she followed behind her father and brother.

Marcus said nothing as his father carried him to his room and tucked him into bed. "Goodnight, son," Alvin said softly, but his son did nothing more than stare unblinking at the ceiling. Alvin sighed as he walked to the door, he then looked back over his shoulder one last time only to see his son turn away from him and, more than likely, continue to stare at the wall.

Alvin was pulled from his thoughts as Gale left his arms and continued into Marcus' room to wake the boys. The rest of the morning went by smoothly as they all sat down to breakfast together. Before long, Alvin was out the door, not to return until later in the day. A few hours later Gale also left for her job at the nursery, where she grew trees and plants for study, leaving Chelsie to look after her brother and Oliver.

To Be Continued. . .

5 - Breaking Down

Chapter Five: Breaking Down

John was in his office, putting away files that contained trial dates and appointment schedules, when he ran across a name he knew. "Wood, Oliver," he whispered, as he looked around to make sure the woman he shared his office with was out of the room. John then opened the file. As he read the contents, his face fell. Several days ago, Alvin Flint came in and reported that the boy's mother had been absent for some time. In the report, he described how the boy came to be in his care and wanted Siliva Wood to be held responsible.

The paperwork had been sent through in a remarkable time lapse and a trial had already been set for Siliva. John covered his mouth with his hand as he found out that Siliva never showed up. Since she never showed up, the Wizengamot ruled that she voluntarily gave up the rights to her child. John could not believe that Siliva would purposely give up her son. This had to be a mistake, he knew, and so set off to contact her right away.

OoOoO

It was late as Siliva came through the door of her apartment. Her head was pounding to the point of explosion and her whole body was tired. As she closed the door behind her, her eyes half closed, she kicked off her shoes and stripped out of her clothing, leaving them in a trail. She made her way towards the couch and collapsed.

The last two weeks had not gone well for her. Jason Conaway, her primary target, was a smart man and did not fall easily for tricks that the others had fallen for. To get what she needed from him would take more dedication than she was used to giving for a job. She never left Oliver alone for this long before and thought about him constantly while she was away. She would have to check on him as soon as possible. With that thought she tried to lift herself from the couch, but found it impossible as her body refused to move and so she gave up and fell asleep soon after.

It was early afternoon when Siliva was awakened by a loud sound outside her window. She yawned as she groggily rose from her slumber to let the owl in. As she opened the window the large brown owl flew in. "Oliver!" she yelled, which she immediately knew was a bad idea as her brain still felt like it was swimming around in her head. Siliva made her way over to the owl, which landed on the armrest of one of the chairs, and untied the parchment from around its leg. She was about to open it, but something caught her eye and she turned her head. There was something on the floor.

Siliva sent the owl away and tossed the letter aside, and went to investigate. She squatted down and ran her finger over the reddish-brown stain. She frowned as she recognized it as dried blood. "Oliver?" she

called again. She then walked over to the bottom of the stairs, and when she didn't receive an immediate reply, she began to make her way up. She walked down the hall and slowly pushed open her son's door. "Oliver?" she called softly, but there was no sign of him.

Siliva hurried back down the stairs and picked up her clothes; ready to put them back on, but as quick as she picked them up she dropped them back to the floor, for more dry blood laid underneath. She was in a panic now. Where was her son?

OoOoO

Oliver sat on the couch in the Flint's home and he looked at the two adults. One was squatted down in front of him while the other stood on the other side of the room with their arms over their chest. "I don't understand," Oliver told them. "She always comes back," he said, on the verge of tears.

"Ollie, sweetie," Gale tried to reach for him. She wanted to comfort him so badly, but he wouldn't allow her to touch him. "It's okay. Alvin and I have discussed this, and if you want to, you can stay with us."

"I want to go home," Oliver told her. "I want my mummy!" he yelled, before covering his face with his hands.

"Oliver, please." Gale took his arms and tried to lower them.

"No!" He pushed her before standing up and running up the stairs. Gale and Alvin then heard a door slam.

"That didn't go well, did it?" Gale asked her husband as he helped her up.

"He's just a little boy. He's scared," Alvin tried to explain. "I mean, it's not everyday you find out your mother doesn't want you anymore." He took Gale in his arms and held her. "He's going to need time, that's all."

Marcus was upstairs in his room when he heard the bathroom door slam shut. He walked out his room and down the hall before he knocked on the door. "Ollie, are you okay?" he had asked. His parents had sat him and Chelsie down the night before while Oliver slept and told them what was going on. They wanted to know how they felt if Oliver became a part of their family. Neither of the children objected to the idea. "Ollie?" he called again. Instead of a reply, all he heard was the sound of the shower coming on.

"Has he locked himself in?" Marcus turned to see Chelsie standing behind him. Marcus checked the knob and she shook her head. "Well, come on then." Chelsie reached out and turned the knob before she and her brother went inside to find Oliver, fully clothed, sitting in the shower. Chelsie sat on the edge of the tub while Marcus knelt beside it and looked in on his friend.

"It's not the end of the world, Ollie," Marcus told him gently.

Oliver turned his head slowly towards the dark haired boy. "How would you know? Your mum still loves you."

"She can be your mum too."

"It's not the same." If he was crying, neither of the Flint children could tell as the water ran down his face. "I have my own mum and I want her."

You're right. It's not the same." Chelsie laid her hand on Oliver's head, and he turned to look at her. "Tell me, Oliver, do you really want to go back to a woman who's always leaving you alone?" she asked him. "How often did you have to tuck yourself in at night? How often did you have to eat at the kitchen table by yourself? Even if it was only once, that's one time too many." Oliver lowered his head at her words.

"Don't you want to be our brother?" Marcus asked him. "We want you to be. It'll be fun, you'll see." He looked at his sister for help. "Tell him, Chelsie."

Chelsie opened her mouth to speak, but Oliver beat her to it. "I don't want to be alone anymore."

"And you won't be." Chelsie slid around and lowered herself into the shower where she wrapped her arms around Oliver, pressing his back against her. Marcus then followed her lead, got in front of them, and put his arms around the both of them. "See this, Ollie? This is never far, this will always be here. . . if only you choose to accept it." They stayed in that position for quite awhile before Oliver lifted his arms. He started to put them around Marcus, but then pulled away before quickly throwing them back around the other and holding him close. Chelsie smiled. "Welcome home. . . little brother."

OoOoO

"What do you mean, I've lost custody?" Siliva yelled at John. "He's my son!"

"I'm sorry, Siliva, but there is no way around it. When you didn't show up for the hearing-"

"How could I? I was on assignment. I didn't know." She paced back and forth in her living room, nervously sweeping her hair behind her ears. "What am I suppose to do? How am I supposed to get him back?" She turned quickly to John. "What about an appeal?"

"You can, but it will be difficult considering Oliver was hurt in your absence," John sighed. "I've read the report, they had an interview with him and though he was quite reluctant, it was very clear that Oliver was used to being on his own, which isn't working on your side either."

Siliva shook her head as she slowly dropped to her knees in front of him. "There has to be something you can do, John. You have connections within the Ministry. What happened to Gatoos taking care of their own?"

"Yes, I have connections," he explained. "I'm prepared to cover up blotched assassinations and to keep you Gatoos out of Azkaban, not make sure you don't lose your children."

"Then what the hell are you good for?" she asked angrily as she stood up, tears running down her face.

"John, I just want my son back. Can you at least tell me where he is?"

John stood up along her. "You can't go after him, not unless. . ."

"Unless what?" She grabbed onto his arm. "What are you not telling me?"

"An appeal may come easier, if you throw the Wood name in, but—"

"Stop, because if you're talking about going back to my father, after he disowned me, there is no way in the world."

"I thought you cared about Oliver?"

"I do."

"Then go back to Scotland."

Siliva shook her head. "I can't. Not after all this time." She clung on to John, burying her head in his chest. "I was doing so well. I know he may have been a bit lonely, but it was all going to pay off if I could just get him through school."

She started to cry softly as John did his best to comfort her, but he had news that would not allow him to do so. "Siliva," he began softly. "I was trying to wait to give you this news, but I don't think I can."

She pulled away from him slightly as she wiped away her tears. "What are you talking about?" she asked as she watched him take a letter out of his robe pocket. He handed it to her. "What is this?" She looked to him, but he only shook his head as he made a gesture for her to open the letter.

As Siliva read the letter to herself, she covered her hand over her mouth. She then looked to John, hoping he would tell her that it was a mistake, but all she got out of him was, "You have forty-eight hours."

The brown-headed woman frowned and shook her head from side to side. "A restraining order, John? I don't understand."

"Oliver is still in the building—"

"What? Where is he?" Siliva started towards the door. "What floor?"

"Siliva." John grabbed her. "You can't."

"Just tell me who has him," she demanded as she once again grabbed onto him.

"It's best if you don't know."

"John!" she yelled.

John sighed. He knew he could not deny her. " Flint."

Siliva just stared at him as if she had misheard him. "Flint? As in Alvin Flint? As in *Death Eater* Alvin Flint?" John merely nodded his head. She then pulled herself away from him and walked over to the bookcase located on the other side of the living room.

John watched as she grabbed a book and frantically started flipping through it. "What are you doing?" he asked her with concern.

Siliva rested the book against her chest as she sighed heavily. She then looked to John and said with a defeated voice, "I'm going home."

To Be Continued. . .

6 - Homecoming

Chapter Six: Homecoming

The summer was finally coming to a close as Chelsie sat on the floor in her room and packed her belongings into her school trunk. Marcus had been standing in her doorway for several minutes as he waited for her to acknowledge him. "What is it Marcus?" she finally asked him, because she was getting tired of him lurking behind her.

"Nothing," he replied as he finally came in and sat down beside her. "I just wanted to help," he explained as he passed one of her books to her. She stuffed it inside her already stuffed trunk. "So," he started again casually after a few minutes. "Will you come home for Christmas?"

"Uh-huh. I knew there was something on your mind," she smiled at him. "Are you missing me already, little brother?" she ruffled his hair with the question. "You do know, you're starting to look like a girl, right?"

Marcus swatted her hand away in play anger. "No, I don't," he defended. "For your information people tell me I look just like dad."

"Yeah," she cocked an eyebrow as she teased him. "If he were a girl."

Marcus frowned slightly. "Do you think I should cut it, because if you tell me to, I will," he told her, not wanting to disappoint her in anyway.

"Mar-Mar, do you like your hair?" she simply asked him.

Chelsie then watched as her little brother played with a curl. "Yeah," he replied.

"Then keep it," she told him and sighed. "Listen to me well, Marcus. It's nice that you are able to listen to other people's options, but sometimes you take them a little too close to heart, especially when they are about you. You need to be able to listen to yourself and be able to make your own choice, alright?" He nodded at her. "Good, and since we're on the subject, I know last year was tough for you, but you keep your head up and write me when need be."

"Okay," he nodded again. "But are you coming home for Christmas?" He truly wanted to know, for she hadn't last year and the holiday just didn't seem right without her.

Chelsie closed her trunk. "It depends on my studies. I have O.W.L.s this year." She watched as Marcus shook his head in confusion. "A really big, important test," she explained. "And I hear because of it, fifth year is the hardest," she told him as she set the lock on her trunk. "But if I feel I don't need to stay for Christmas to catch up, then yeah, I'll be home." Marcus beamed at her and he hugged her. Chelsie

shook her head as she hugged him back. "You are a strange little troll," she said lovingly.

"Don't call me that," Marcus replied, not really meaning it. He really didn't mind the nickname his sister always called him.

"Humph!" Chelsie cried loudly as she was pushed a little forward. Marcus looked up to see why. Oliver had jumped onto her back and wrapped his arms around her neck. "A sneak attack, huh? Well, it's good to see you're feeling better anyway." Chelsie grabbed onto his arms and stood up as Marcus followed suit. Oliver laughed as his legs coiled around Chelsie and she gave him a piggyback ride. "Hey, how about a lesson, before it gets too dark?"

"Yeah!" Marcus jumped up excited, as Oliver in turned groaned. "And you think I'm strange?" Marcus looked to his sister doubtfully.

She only shrugged as she patted Oliver's leg as a signal for him to get down. "I'm not strange," Oliver replied. "I'm just tired of kicking your butt." He smiled as he soon discovered that when it came to the Flint children it was Quidditch all day, everyday and so it was either spend a lot of time by himself, or learn to play the game.

"Please, I was letting you win to make you feel better," Marcus crossed his arms as a smirk spread across his face. "But if I had been really trying, you would have seen how badly you play."

"Oh yeah?" Oliver challenged.

"Yeah," Marcus nodded his head.

Oliver stepped to him and poked the other's chest. "Then you're on."

"I'll grab the brooms," Marcus stated. "And I bet I still beat you outside." With that Oliver took off out the door. "Hey! You cheated! I didn't say, go!" Marcus cried as he took off after Oliver.

"Guys," Chelsie whined. "Wait for me." She grabbed her own broom out of her closet and ran after the pair.

OoOoO

It was late in the afternoon as Alvin arrived home from a long day of work. He entered through the door, he was almost knocked over by two little boys running past. "Hi, dad," Marcus called in passing as he zipped by.

"Hello, Mist- I mean, Alvin," Oliver also greeted him quickly as he followed Marcus into the kitchen. Alvin smiled as the two left his sight. To his relief, Oliver was slowly starting to adjust to life with them. The first two weeks had been the hardest for them all. Oliver was understandably angry, as he had it in his mind that the Mr. and Mrs. Flint were keeping his mother away from him on purpose. But as the days went passing by and he saw no sign of her returning, it really sunk into his mind that maybe she really didn't

want him anymore.

After that discovery, he had gone into a slight depression and found it hard to keep down his food. They soon realized that the reason wasn't because he was sad, but because Oliver, Marcus, and Chelsie used to ride their brooms after eating, and all the air didn't agree with him.

Marcus and Oliver were now sitting down at the kitchen table with books in front of them. It had only a few weeks into the new school year, but it had already started to feel like it had been going on for years, or at least that's how it felt for Marcus as he sat staring at his homework. The tip of his pencil touched his paper slightly, rested in his left hand while his right hand's fingers were becoming lost within black curls and were slowly drawing together to form a fist. "Ahhhh!" he yelled in frustration as he started pulling at his hair. "I don't care!" he shouted down at his book and angrily threw it to the floor.

Oliver looked up from his own schoolwork. "Mar-Mar?" he began cautiously. "Is everything alright?"

"Does everything look alright?" he replied after kicking his book across the floor. "I can't do this shoot," he spoke as he shook in anger, lowering his head until his hair fell in curtains around his face. He then said in a small voice, "The kids at school are right. . . I am stupid."

Oliver's eyes went wide for a moment as he heard the dirty word leave Marcus' mouth, but he soon recovered as he heard what the other kids thought of Marcus. Oliver then hopped out of seat and went to pick up the book off the floor. He held it to himself as he walked over to Marcus and placed a hand on his shoulder. "You're not stupid," he reassured Marcus. "It just takes you a bit longer than most, that's all. But there's nothing wrong with that." He then went and placed the book on the table. "Come on, I'll help you. We'll figure it out together."

Marcus tilted his head in Oliver's direction before bring his hand up to his face and pushing his hair behind his ear. His bright blue eyes came back into Oliver's view as he gave him a lopsided smile before he spoke, "You'll help me?"

"Of course I will," Oliver replied as he returned his smile. He then sat down and patted the seat next to him. Marcus took his seat and Oliver pushed the book in front of him. "Just show me what page."

Marcus took a deep breath before taking the book in his hands and flipping through the pages to the section he had been working on. "Alright, but I'm telling you, long division is tricky."

"I'm sure it's tough," Oliver agreed with him as he read the instructions on the page. "But I'm sure that together, we can do anything."

Marcus felt a bit a shame having to seek help and disclosing so freely his low self-esteem when it came to his schoolwork. He lowered his head, trying to hide his face, which was gradually becoming red with embarrassment, behind his hair again. "Thank you," he spoke softly.

Marcus recoiled a bit as he suddenly felt Oliver's hand in his hair as he pushed it back to reveal his face. "Don't mention it. It's what brothers do, right?" he asked and Marcus nodded his head; his face still red, but not for the same reason as before.

OoOoO

Dear Oliver,

I don't know if you're receiving my letters or not, but I do hope they are finding you well. Please know that this is not how I wished for things to be. I had no choice but to give you up, I had no hand in the matter, but I am not giving up. It is not the end of our world. I am doing everything in my power to make sure that you ended up where you belong, which is back with me.

This means doing something I told myself I would never do, but you are more important than my stubborn, prideful nature. So until the time that we are able to be back together, please take care of yourself and try not to worry. If you can, please write me back and tell me how the Flints are treating you, but if you can't, I understand.

And this goes without saying, but I love you so very much and I miss you everyday.

*Your loving mother,
Siliva Wood*

Alvin read over the letter as he shook his head from side to side. "This letter is in complete violation of the restraining order," he told Gale as he made to rip it up.

"Alvin, stop," Gale reached for his hand and lowered it. "Maybe- maybe we should let him look at it. I mean she is his mother." Gale didn't know exactly what Siliva was feeling, but she knew if she had to be separated from her children that it would simply tear her up inside. "He needs to know that she still cares."

"Gale, if she cared, she wouldn't have left him like she did. If she cared she would have shown up at the hearing and explained herself," with his words he ripped up the letter and threw it out. "He will never accept us as his parents if he thinks she is coming back. For crying out loud, I only just got him to stop calling me 'Mr. Flint' the other day."

"But darling, what if she does find a why to get him back? He's going to hate us when he finds out she used to write him and we just threw them out," she tried to explain.

Alvin took his wife's arms and kissed her forehead. "It won't happen." He then pulled her close. "I'm filing the adoption papers tomorrow and once he has our name it's as good as set in stone."

"I don't know."

"Don't know what?" he asked pulling away from her slight. "Are you having second thoughts about the adoption?"

"No, of course not. I want nothing more than that child in this home. It's just-" she sighed. "It's just this feeling I have. As if something isn't right."

"What ever it is, I'm sure it will pass. I'm sure it's nothing more than having to adjust to all these changes," Alvin tried to ease his wife's uncertainties.

"Maybe you're right," she agreed as she pulled him back to her.

OoOoO

It was raining outside and Siliva was soaked to the bone as she stood on the porch of a large estate. Her hand reached out for the doorbell, but before her fingers even touched it she stopped herself. *I don't want to do this*, was all she could think as she leaned her head up against the door. But as she did, she realized she had done a lot of things she didn't want to do for the sake of her son, so what was one more?

So finally she rang the doorbell and waited for someone to arrive. She was expecting one of the House Elves to open the door for her, so she was surprised when she saw the face of her youngest sister. "Siliva?" she asked slowly. "Siliva, is that you?"

"Yes, Enatina, it's me," Siliva responded as her voice broke and tears ran down her already wet cheeks. "Where's papa? I- I want to come home."

"Oh, Siliva," Enatina reached for her and Siliva was taken back as her little sister threw her arms around her. "We've all missed you so much." She then pulled away. "Hurry, come inside, before you catch a death of a cold."

Siliva walked down the hall with her sisters' arms around her. "You're not mad at me?" she asked.

"For what?" Enatina didn't understand.

"For leaving the way I did," she explained.

"You stood up to papa, in a way you had never done before. You did what you needed to do to be happy. I can't be mad at you for that," she told her.

"I was wrong, Enatina, and I have been punished for it."

"How?"

"My first love was taken from me before his time, so that I could fall in love with another who's already a married man. Worse than that, I have a son, who was stolen from me, and I am no longer allowed to see him," she explained. "That's why I've come home, for my Oliver."

Enatina didn't know what to say at first as she led her eldest sister to their father, she couldn't imagine the kind of pain her sister had gone through. But eventually she found her voice and gave words of comfort to her sister. "Don't worry, Siliva. You're home now, and we can make it all right."

To Be Continued. .

7 - October Sky

Chapter Seven: October Sky

A ten-year-old Marcus Flint sat alone at his Muggle grade school within the cafeteria. Usually a child of his background, one of a Wizarding family, would have been home-schooled, but since both of his parents worked, he was forced to attend what he called his own personal hell. But things had started looking up for him about two years ago when Oliver was transferred and they were allowed to attend the same school.

Oliver made the day easier for Marcus, but since they were in different grades, they only saw each other during lunch, which is why Marcus couldn't understand what was taking his brother so long. Usually when Marcus came into the cafeteria, Oliver was already sitting down waiting for him. Marcus sighed not looking up from his food as he hoped that Oliver would show up soon.

"What's wrong, Marcus?" came a voice from beside the dark haired boy. Marcus cringed as the person took a seat next to him. "Aw, did your baby brother abandon you today?" asked Marcus' classmate named Noah.

"Yeah," came another voice Marcus recognized as his other classmate, Martin. "Maybe he finally realized what a loser you are and decided to cut his losses." Marcus stayed quiet. He knew if he did, that they would soon grow bored of their daily teasing and leave him alone. "Come on, mate, tell me, what it feels like to know you're the butt of everyone's joke?"

"Don't ask that, Martin," Noah spoke up. "You know he's too stupid to understand the question. He may start to think about it and his brain might blow up."

"Good point," Martin took a step back. "Let's go, I don't want to catch his kind of stupid." The boys laughed as they walked off.

Marcus finally looked up from his tray when he thought it was safe too. *One more year, I only have to be here one more year, so starting today I won't be spoken to like that by those two again,* he promised himself. *In fact, I am not going to let anyone talk to me like that anymore, no one.*

OoOoO

It was the end of the day and Marcus found himself out in the hall leaning next to the locker that belonged to Oliver. He waited patiently until he saw Oliver coming his way. "Hey," Oliver greeted him as he opened his locker.

"Where were you?" Marcus almost yelled at Oliver as he arranged some books in his locker before taking the ones that he needed out.

"Huh?" Oliver looked confused as he readjusted the strap of his book bag before swinging it onto his shoulder.

"Where were you at lunch?" Marcus demanded to know.

"Oh," Oliver said and then blinked a few times before then starting to head towards the exit, ready to go home. "I had to stay in class for something. No big deal really," he explained.

"What happened? Did you get in trouble with the teacher?" he asked as he followed suit behind his brother.

"No, nothing like that. I wanted to stay. My class is doing a science project for the fair and I just wanted to get ahead on my section," Oliver told him.

"Then how come you didn't come and get me? I would have helped you out," Marcus said, knowing he would have volunteered, no matter what the task, just as long as he didn't have to be himself during lunch.

Marcus then found himself cocking an eyebrow curiously as he saw a frown mark Oliver's features, but then the frown quickly disappeared. Oliver looked at Marcus unaware that he had caught his expression. "That's okay. Like I said before, it's a class project, I have plenty of help."

Marcus was disappointed as he heard the response, but said nothing as he nodded his head and the two continued there way towards the exit. But before they reached the exit, they heard a voice from the crowd, "Oliver!"

Oliver turned to see who was calling his name and a smile came to his face as realized whom it was. "Hey, Amanda," he greeted the girl.

"I'm glad I caught you," she smiled just as brightly at him. "I just wanted to thank you for today."

The smile on Oliver's face slowly faded as he took a chance to look at Marcus who looked confused. Oliver took a hold of Amanda's arm and pulled her off to the side where Marcus couldn't hear them. The smile soon returned to Oliver's face along with a rising blush to his cheeks.

Marcus' brow furrowed as other students passed between him and the two on the other side of the hall, but all that Marcus could focus on was this Amanda girl with the long brown hair and her too blushing face. It was at that moment Marcus realized that his brother had lied to him. He had been with her during lunch, this - this girl.

Marcus left hand slowly balled up into a fist and shook with anger. He growled softly before turning away from Amanda and Oliver and heading home on his own.

It was late into the night as Oliver and Marcus sat outside their parent's door in the dark. "Just tell me how long this has been going on?" Gale demanded to know.

"Keep your voice down. You're going to wake the boys," Alvin told her.

"The boys are fine," she spat. "But you aren't. So just tell me, how long have you been seeing her?"

"What?" Alvin was completely thrown off by the question. "That can't be what you think."

"I'm not stupid, Alvin. I know you've been seeing her. So just tell me how long you've been frackin' me over?" she asked again. Outside the door, Marcus drew his legs in and wrapped his arms around them. He had never heard his mother so upset before. It seemed as if late that they had been arguing more and more.

"Gale," he began slowly. "We've been married for over twenty years, we have two - three children, how could possibly think that of me?"

"You want to know why?" she asked as the boys heard shuffling in the room. "This is why," there was then a pause. "Just don't stand there. Take it."

There was then a long silence before either spoke again. "I can explain," Alvin said in a voice so soft that Oliver and Marcus had almost missed it.

"Well, then this should be good," was Gale's response.

But before Marcus was able to hear what his father had to say. He saw an owl hopping out of his bedroom door. He immediately recognized it as a school from Hogwarts. Chelsie had written. Marcus then quietly got to his feet. Oliver turned to him and gave him a look that Marcus translated to, 'What are you doing?' Marcus pointed down the hall and pointed out the owl. Oliver, understanding, nodded his head and turned back towards the door.

Marcus walked passed the owl and it followed him back in the safety of the bedroom he shared with Oliver. He sat on the floor as the owl came near and untied the piece of parchment. He unfolded the letter and began to read.

Dear Ollie and Mar-Mar-

Marcus stopped as soon as he started and frowned at the piece of parchment. It was the first time she had ever addressed Oliver before him, but Marcus was sure he was just overreacting and continued to read.

Dear Ollie and Mar-Mar,

Well, it's finally October and you guys know what that means. Quidditch season! I'm so excited because

as you know this will be my first and last chance to play this game as Captain. Of course, the game will be against our rival house. The buggers, they aren't going to know what hit them. My team is really strong this year, so that cup is as good as ours.

I can feel it in my hands already. And of course, I know it won't be the last time I ever see it, because I know once you two make my house that I'll see it in my little brothers' hands every year. Look at me, I'm already proud of you guys and you haven't done anything yet, but I know you won't let me down.

Anyway, I got your last letter about mum and dad. I'm telling you right now, don't worry about it and stay out of grown folks business. Married people fight, there's no way around it. Besides mum and dad love each other too much to let anything get in between them for too long. I mean, if there's one thing I can count on in my life, it's that those two are inseparable. So no more listening to them outside their door. You both are growing boys, get your sleep.

Well, wish me luck for my game and don't forget to write.

*Always,
Chels*

After reading it, Marcus folded the letter back up and threw it on a desk for Oliver to read later. He then allowed the owl to leave before venturing back out into the hallway and down the hall. As he approached, he heard from the other side of the door. "I'll make it better, Gale. I'll swear I'll fix this," he heard his father say as it was accompanied by what sounded like his mother's crying. What happened? Marcus thought and looked to Oliver still sitting on the floor.

He was about to ask quietly what he had missed, but just then his eye had readjusted to the darkness and he was able to see Oliver's face. His mouth hung open and his eyes were wide. Marcus rested on his knees before Oliver and reached out for him, but Oliver pushed his hand out the way. Oliver then stood up and ran down the hall back into the bedroom they shared.

Curious, Marcus followed and found Oliver back in bed. "Ollie," he called softly. "What happened? Why is mum so upset?"

"He's been meeting with my mum," Oliver said with his back to him.

"Who's been meeting with mum?" Marcus asked.

"No, you don't understand," Oliver shook his head and finally turned to Marcus. "He's been meeting with my mum."

"I'm confused," Marcus admitted.

"I'm not a Flint," he told him straight out. "I never was."

Marcus sat down at the end of the bed and looked at him in disbelief. "Of course you are," he tried to reassure him. "Dad took care of that a long time ago."

"The papers never went through," he explained. "They disappeared after dad turned them in. Gale thought that he had known all along that they never went through." Oliver found it easier to call Alvin 'dad' than it was to call Gale 'mom'.

Marcus lowered his head. This couldn't be happening. "Does that mean. . ." he couldn't bring himself to say it.

"Yes," Oliver answered, understanding what Marcus was trying to say. "She's coming for me."

"When?"

"I don't know," he answered, not knowing how to feel. Was he supposed to be happy because his birth mother wanted him back, or sad because she was trying to take him away from his new family. A family he never had with her. Why was she doing this, why couldn't she just leave him alone, he wondered.

"Do- do you want to go back?" Marcus asked as he thought about the other day when Oliver had left him behind.

"I-" Oliver sighed before shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, if you care any, I don't want you to go," Marcus began. "So if you can, will you stay? Will you stay with me?" he asked with tears beginning to run from his eyes.

"I want to stay," Oliver said before thinking about it. He just didn't want to see Marcus sad, not his best friend. He crawled over to Marcus, who was still sitting on the end of the bed and wrapped his arms around him to give him a hug.

Suddenly, Oliver gasped sharply and pulled away from Marcus as if he had been burned. Marcus immediately lowered his head in shame, not believing he had just done that. He didn't mean to- it was only meant to be a hug, nothing more. "You kissed me," Oliver spoke just staring at him.

Marcus cringed at Oliver's tone. "I'm sorry. I-" he didn't have the words.

Oliver stared at him for a moment more. "I think it's time to go to bed," he suggested softly.

"Yeah," Marcus agreed still not looking at him as he slid off Oliver's bed and climbed into his own. "Good night," he called, but received no reply as the dim lights faded and they were surrounded not only by the darkness, but also by confusion.

To Be Continued. . .

8 - On Broken Wings

Chapter Eight: On Broken Wings

Oliver sat quietly on his bed as he read a book for class entitled, *Charlotte's Web*. From the corner of his eye he saw Marcus enter the room and toss his book bag on his own bed. He then heard Marcus take a deep breath before he spoke. "You haven't said a word to me in two days," he stated.

"There's nothing to say," Oliver told him, flipping his book to the next page.

"Do you need me to apologize again for the other day?" Marcus asked.

"Apologize for what? Nothing happened," Oliver said defensively.

"Alright. Sure," Marcus replied giving in easily before turning around to walk out the door, but then stopped. He was letting him do it again. He was letting Oliver, a boy more than a year his junior, call the shots and it had to stop.

"Hey!" Oliver yelled when Marcus yanked the book from his hands.

"Listen to me, Ollie," Marcus's face was set in determination. "If you can't remember what happened, then let me remind you."

Marcus then leaned in to kiss the other, but before he could, he was pushed away. "What are you doing?" Oliver yelled at him with wide eyes, shaking his head from side to side. "I'm a boy! You're a boy! Boys don't do that. They're not suppose to like that!"

"I'm sorry," Marcus cried, extremely embarrassed at such a rash action he had taken. "I only thought if I could-" he stopped, his mind just now taking in Oliver's words. He then smiled softly. "You liked the kiss I gave you, didn't you?" he asked.

"No," Oliver said seriously, his face turning a bit red. "Now get off my bed, Mar-Mar."

Marcus's smile fell. He knew he had upset Oliver and so reached out to comfort him. "Ollie," he began softly, but Oliver once again pushed him away.

"Fine, if you won't get up, I will," he told Marcus as he swung his legs over the edge of the bed and stood up.

"Oliver, please," Marcus took a hold of the other's sleeve.

Oliver looked down at where Marcus had taken a hold of him. He then slowly rose his brown eyes to meet a set of blue ones. "You're my brother, Marcus, and if you think this is okay, you're just not sick, but

as about as stupid as you look."

Marcus' mouth fell open at Oliver's words as he pulled his hand away and held on tightly to the fabric of his own shirt. Oliver cringed as he sighed, knowing he had gone too far. He knew Marcus was sensitive when it came to that word.

Oliver was about to apologize, but before he could Marcus spoke first. "Please," it came out as a hiss. "Don't flatter yourself." Marcus' whole demeanor changed as he brought his hand down along with his head, allowing his dark hair to mask his features. "You're not my real brother," he finally stood. "You're not even a real Flint. You're just some kid my parents took pity on." He then pushed Oliver roughly back onto the bed. "So if you think, for one moment, I'm going to allow you to talk to me like that again, you've got another thing coming."

Oliver said nothing, though mostly because he was in shock. Marcus had never threaten anyone, let alone him. And so the boys stared defiantly into one another's eyes, neither wanting to succumb to the other. "Marcus! Oliver!" They were torn away from each other as they heard Gale's voice. "Boys!" she yelled again.

"Yes, ma'am?" Marcus called.

"I need you boys to put on your coats," she told them from downstairs.

"Alright," Marcus replied, he then saw Oliver picking himself up off the bed, and so pushed him back down before laughing a bit. He then made his way over to the closet to grab what he needed before going down to see what his mother wanted of them.

"Where's Oliver?" she asked when Marcus arrived.

"He's coming," was all he said as he finished zipping up his coat. "Where are we going?" he asked as he noticed his mother's face. She looked upset as he watch her fold up a piece a parchment and stick it in her pocket.

He received no answer from her as Oliver finally made his way down the stairs, his hands in his coat pocket. "Come on," Gale instructed the boys as she grabbed her house keys and the three were out the door.

The boys had no idea where they were going at first as they followed Gale, who was gradually picking her her pace, making the boys having to run a few steps from time to time. Then as they continued their journey Marcus recognized a few streets. They were going towards his father's job. "Give me your hands," Gale told them as traffic had picked up and they were about to cross the street. Gale dragged them along, holding each of their hands with a crushing grip, as if a afraid to let them slip away.

Once they neared the building, she released them and held the door open for them as they stepped inside. "Sit here," she told them when they arrived in the lobby. "Don't go anyway," she said sternly before going to find her husband.

Alvin was in his office, doing his editor's job. . . again, when he heard a knock on his door. "Come in,"

he called, not looking up from his work.

“Alvin,” his head snapped up curiously when he heard his wife's voice.

“Gale?” He laid down his work and stood as he saw the distressed look on her face. “What's wrong?”

“It's Chelsie,” she told him as she pulled out the letter she had received only a little while ago.
“There's been an accident.”

Alvin frowned as he he practically yanked the letter from her hands. “What kind of accident?” he asked as he unfolded the letter and his eyes scanned it over. “A Quidditch accident?” He looked to his wife. “But she's been injured in the game before, the school has never called us in.”

“I know,” she said. She then reached out and touched her husband's arm gently. “I want to see her now, Alvin.”

Alvin nodded his head as he got ready to leave. He didn't plan on telling anyone he was leaving work early. “Where are the boys?” he asked.

“They're with me. They're waiting in the lobby,” she informed him as he guided her out the office and closed the the door behind them. A few people looked at Alvin curiously as the couple passed, but the look on his face made them reconsider asking him where he was going.

As they made their way to the ground floor towards the lobby they noticed Oliver sitting alone. “Where's Marcus?” Gale asked him.

Oliver dangled his legs underneath his seat as he watched them swing. “Am I his keeper?” he asked in response.

Oliver was then taken by surprise as he was roughly grabbed by the shoulder and forced to stand. He looked up to see Alvin's face set in anger. “Don't sass,” the man barked at him. “Today is not the day.” The child lowered his head before nodding. Alvin sighed, he was upset, but the last thing he ever wanted to do was raise his hand towards one of his children. “Answer her question, Ollie,” he spoke gently.

Oliver slightly turned his head as he lifted his hand and pointed down the the hall to his left. “He only went to the bathroom,” he finally answered. When Marcus returned, he received a small lecture about obeying his mother before the left the building.

Since the small family was unable to Apparate onto Hogwarts school grounds they opted to use the Floo system. Before long they stood before the Headmaster Dumbledore who had been waiting for them in his office where they arrived. “Aw, Mr. and Mrs. Flint,” he greeted them as he stood. “I'm sorry to see you again under the circumstance.”

Marcus, throughout the course of the small journey had no clue what was going on, but as he once again saw worried and distraught faces around him a sinking feeling overcame the pit of his stomach. He could feel it as a cold chill ran down his spine and he shook visibly. . . something was wrong. Marcus was then taken by surprised when he felt Oliver take his hand. He looked down at their laced fingers,

Oliver clinging to him desperately. Marcus then knew he wasn't alone, it seemed that Oliver also knew something wasn't right.

"Where is she now?" Gale responded without delay. "The letter never specified what kind of injury it was."

"She's with Madam Pomfrey in the hospital wing, but your daughter's injury is beyond the scope of her expertise," he explained and then looked at the two small boys behind their parents. He smiled at them softly as if trying to offer comfort, but it was not received.

"What does that mean?" Gale asked.

Dumbledore proceeded to answer her. "It means, I think it would be wise if she was moved to St. Mungo's for further treatment, but of course, her parents' consent was needed before she could be removed from the school grounds."

"I demand to see my daughter, now," Alvin spoke for the first time, his voice deeper than normal as he regarded the other man.

"Of course," Dumbledore nodded as he moved from behind his desk. "If you'll follow me," he told them before leading them to the exit and they began, what felt like a very long walk, to the hospital wing.

The air felt different as the doors they needed to enter came into their view. It had become thick and heavy, the air, and though Marcus was silently taking deep breaths, he felt as if he wasn't getting another air into his lungs. They felt as if they were burning within him. He wanted to see Chelsie and he wanted to see her now. He studied the pace the other people with him. They were moving slowly as if the the journey had not been long enough and he couldn't stand it anymore. And so, he yanked his hand away from Oliver's and then without warning broke out into a run towards the huge doors in front of the small group, pushing his parents and the Headmaster out his way as he did so.

"Marcus!" Gale bellowed, as her son's reaction. She reached out a hand to stop him, but as she did so, felt Alvin's hand take her wrist gently.

Gale looked to her husband, his sad eyes betraying the stern look of his expression as he shock his head from side to side. "Let him go," he whispered.

Marcus, with both hands on the handle, pulled opened the offending object with little effort and charged into the room, but froze only a few steps from the door as he entered the spacious room. A shiver ran over him as he saw his sister in the furthest bed from the door, located next to the nurse's office. His first step was small as the heel of shoe made a small echo within the room, but he gradually picked up his pace to match the beating of his overactive heart. "Chelsie," he called half way through the room. "Chelsie," he called again as he got closer, expecting her to turn her head and to look at him, but she remained still. So unearthly still.

As Marcus finally reached the bed, his steps slowed into a stop as he peered at his sister. She looked so pale, that the long red mark that stretched across her forehead stood out like an apple among oranges. He then heard the sound of a door and looked to see a women who could only be Madam Pomfrey.

"Hello, child," she greeted him gently, but he ignored her as he reached for his sister's hand, it was as cold as ice.

Soon Marcus felt the presence of his father behind him. Alvin reached cautiously out and placed his hand on top of his first born's head. Gale stood beside him and Oliver next to her. After many minutes a small voice was heard. "Fix her," the voice came from Oliver as he spoke to the nurse.

Madam Pomfrey looked at him apologetically, "I'm sorry, son, but there's nothing I can do."

"Are you trying to make my sister out to be a liar?" asked Marcus his eyes never leaving his sister, his voice low as it had been that morning. "She told me you could fix anything, so honor my brother's request," he told the woman. "Fix her."

Madam Pomfrey had no words for the little boys who were obviously in more pain than she could ever imagine. She looked up at their parents as Alvin made to speak. "What happened?" he asked.

"I think- I think I can explained that sir," came a voice from behind them.

The group, save for Marcus, turned to see two red headed boys. The small one looked to be about a second year. "Um. . ." he took a deep breath as he avoided eye contact with the Flints. The boy then felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up to see the fourth year boy who nodded his head reassuringly. "My name is Charles. Charles Weasley, and I'm the reason Chelsie is here."

Gale looked confused. "You attacked your own teammate?" she asked.

"No!" Charlie's eyes went wide as he shook his head violently from side to side. "No, ma'am nothing like that," he explained. "See it was my first game and usually I'm a pretty good flier, but somehow I lost control of my broom and we collided, making her too lose control of her broom-"

"No!" Marcus yelled out angrily, finally turning around to look at the older boy. "Chelsie has never lost control of her broom! You're lying!" he marched over to him as he yelled. "You clumsy, no good, red-headed freak!" he yelled even louder, jumping on the boy and striking his face.

"Marcus!" Gale ran over to help the fourth year boy get her son off Charlie who was unsuccessfully trying to cover his face from Marcus' blows. "Enough. I said, enough!" she yelled as she finally detached her son, whom she finally noticed had tears running down his face before he clung onto her and refused to let go.

An hour later, the small family had settled Chelsie into her new room within St. Mungo's. They were told that she was in coma and they had no idea when she would wake up. Marcus took the news the hardest as he crumbled to the floor, but tears refused to leave his eyes. "Weasley," Marcus, in disgust, whispered to himself.

Oliver then rested himself beside him. "He'll pay," he whispered to his brother. "We'll see to it. . . together." Marcus nodded his head and agreed.

To Be Continued. . .

9 - And So the Game Begins

Chapter Nine: And So the Game Begins

How did we get here? Marcus asked himself as he looked at the woman sitting across from him and his family. *I don't want to be here*, he continued to think as the man standing behind the woman spoke. The man's name was Bernard Clemens and the woman was Oliver's birth mother, Siliva Wood.

"Seeing as young Oliver has almost reached eleven years of age, it has become his decision who he wants to stay with," he told the small group of people.

"What?" Oliver, whose head had been down, looked up at the statement. "I- I have to choose?" he asked, not sure if he was up for such a daunting task as Clemens' nodded his head.

Oliver turned his head towards Marcus, who had reached over and took his hand, which had been clenching tightly at his pants. Marcus slightly shook his head from side to side, eyes growing wide. "You can't go," he whispered to him. "You're my brother, don't leave me alone," he asked of him. He and Oliver had had a rough year, with Marcus going away to do his first year at Hogwarts and Chelsie still deep in her coma. They had kept in touch through owls, but Marcus couldn't wait for Oliver to join him at school where they could be together all the time.

Oliver then felt an hand on his shoulder and turned to his other side to see the only man he had ever called his father. "It's alright, whatever you choose, son," he smiled sadly.

"Don't tell him that," Gale told Alvin angrily. "Tell him to stay!"

"Oliver?" The man standing behind Siliva. "If you please."

Oliver looked at all the people in the room before his eyes landed on Siliva. He then asked softly, "Why did you always leave me?"

Siliva leaned over the table. "I promise, Oliver, I'll never leave you alone again," she looked at Alvin suspiciously for a moment. "Never."

Oliver once again lowered his head as he closed his eyes. "I want to go home," he spoke, causing Gale to smile. "I want to be with my mum," he finished.

"What?" Marcus looked at the other in disbelief, he had never called Gale 'mum', not once, not even on accident, for Oliver had only considered one woman his mother.

"Excuse me," Gale rose from the table and hurriedly stepped out of the room.

"Gale!" Alvin went after her.

Siliva wasted no time as she walked to the other side of the table and embraced her son. Oliver threw his arms around his mother and buried his face into her shoulder. "You heard him, Clemens," she told the man, her eyes closed her tears slide down her cheeks. "Contact my father, tell him that today is the day he meets his firstborn grandson."

Marcus slowly stood up and took a step back, his face lost of all emotion as his eyes never the left the pair in front of him. His brow then slowly began to crease before he turned without a word and over to the door. He turned around one last time to see Oliver looking at him, but Oliver than dropped his gaze before closing his eyes and hold his mother tighter. Marcus then silently left the room to follow his parents.

OoOoO

It was September, the first day back at Hogwarts for Marcus as he sat with a few more second years at the Slytherin table. "Oi, Flint," Jamie Harris, called to his friend from cross the table as the first years piled into the Great Hall.

"What?" Marcus responded not looking at him, as he talked to their House's Quidditch Captain about when tryouts were going to be that year. "So which ones your little brother?" he asked innocently.

Marcus felt his eye twitch. "I don't have a brother," he told him.

"What are you talking about?" Jamie turned him body back towards the table and Marcus. "Last term you couldn't shut up about the little bugger."

"Look," Marcus finally turned his head towards his House mate and said slowly, "I. Don't. Have. A. Brother."

"What was his name?" Jamie thought out loud. "I know it started with an 'O'. Octavian. . . no. Omar. . . no."

"Jamie, shut it," Marcus seethed.

Jamie ignored him. "Oldrich?" He shook his head, knowing that wasn't it.

"Harris, I'm warning you," Marcus threaten as he clenched his school robes tightly.

Jamie smiled as he snapped his fingers before pointing his index at Marcus. "Oliver! That's it, right?" he asked.

Suddenly, Marcus rose from his seat and leaned across the table as he reached and grabbed a handful of Jamie's red hair. Jamie gasped in surprise before his head was slammed against glass plate on the table, shattering it into piece. "When I say 'shut up', you will shut your fat lip," he told the boy before slamming his head against the table again. "I don't have a brother," he repeated as he finally let go. He

then straightened himself up as he adjusted his robes. "Never liked redheads anyway," he murmured as he pushed back his own hair, which he finally cut to about ear length, after being mistaken for a girl the first month of his first year.

"My nose!" Jamie screamed as his hands came up to his face.

"What did I just tell you!" Marcus, losing his composure again, screamed as he tried to leaped over the table, but never reached Jamie as a few upperclassmen finally grabbed onto him before he could. "Let me go!" he fought against them.

A moment later, Professor Snape along with Madam Pomfrey came over and were surprised that it took a couple of seventh years to hold down such a small boy. "Take him to my office," he ordered them and they obeyed, Marcus fussing all the way, as Snape followed behind them as Madam Pomfrey helped Jamie out of the Great Hall.

"Who in the world was that nut case?" asked a girl next to Oliver to another.

"I have no clue, but if they're all like that, I certainly don't want to be in that House," the girl concluded as the other agreed. Oliver swallowed hard as he saw the murderous intent in his Marcus's eyes, they were directed towards him.

OoOoO

It was the next morning as Marcus stuffed his books for the day into his bookbag. He sighed. "What?" he asked as he looked up over to one of his roommates Terrence Higgs who was staring at him from his own bed.

"I was just wondering, is this going to be some kind of tradition?" he asked.

"What are you going on about?" He swung his bag over his shoulder.

"Last night at the welcome back dinner and last year with Jenkins," Terrence explained.

"Harris got what he deserved," he told him as they started their way out of their room so they could head to class. "And so did Jenkins."

"Alright, I can understand Jenkins. He took things too far with the troll rumors and. . . well, come on, Flint, you got to admit with the hair, I thought you were a girl too, until you spoke."

Marcus tilted his head in his direction, a sour look on his face. "Be glad you're my friend," he told him.

Terrence laughed as he slapped his fellow Slytherin on the back. "Oh, believe me, I am." He then cleared his throat, a bit nervous as he continued. "But I don't understand Harris. He was right, you know, about you going on about your brother."

Marcus exhaled through his nose as they existed from the dungeons to the crowded corridors of Hogwarts as other students bustled to and fro. "I don't have a brother. I think I made that clear last night."

"Yeah, alright," Terrence caved knowing he wasn't going to get anything out of the stubborn boy. "Hope the detentions were worth it."

"They were," Marcus then continued in a whisper, "and I would appreciate if we never brought up my brother."

"What brother?" Terrence said with a smile that Marcus graciously returned. "So, you were talking to Jackson last night, what did he say about the tryouts?" he asked about their House's Quidditch Captain.

"Yeah, he said something about giving him a few weeks," he stated. "Have you been practicing over the summer like I told you?"

"You know I have. I can't let you have all the glory on the-" Terrence stopped as he realized that Marcus wasn't by his side anymore. He turned around to see that Marcus was frozen in place, as if debating something. "Flint?" Terrence called out curiously. "What's up?"

"Nothing," he told him as he took a step backwards. "I'll meet you in class, okay?"

Terrence, looked at his watch. "You're going to be late," he warned. "It's the first day." Marcus only told him to save him a seat before he turned around and made his way in the opposite direction.

Marcus walked quickly as the brown headed boy came into his view once again, who had only passed him and Terrence a moment ago, without even acknowledging him. *How dare he?* Marcus thought. He didn't like the fact that Oliver was pretending he didn't know him, like they hadn't shared a room for several years, like they had never sat at the same table to share a meal or like he had never gone back on his word to always be brothers.

Marcus placed his hand on Oliver's shoulder as he reached him. He then looked to the pair of first years whom he was walking with. "Beat it," he demanded softly. Recognizing him as the boy who had to be dragged out of the Great Hall from last night, they made no hesitation as they scurried away.

Oliver gripped the strap of his bookbag tightly. "Morning, Mar-Mar," his voice quivered as he spoke.

"As you know, the name is Flint. Understand that, Wood? That's the only name you're allowed to call me, if at all," he made clear.

Oliver looked pained as he shook his head from side to side. He knew what this was about and so got right to the point. "She's my mum. What did you want me to do?"

"Stay!" Marcus admitted in a whisper as the halls began to clear. "I wanted you to stay."

"I couldn't, she needed me," Oliver argued. "You saw her, I would have broken her heart, if I didn't go with her." Then without warning, Oliver found himself pressed hard up against a wall.

"What about my mum's heart, you selfish bastard?" Marcus asked angrily as he held him by the collar. "She cries herself to sleep over you. My father mourns you as if you have died." Marcus shook his head back and forth. "Don't you get it? You were their son. You were my brother. We loved you, dammit!"

Oliver then smacked his hand away. "Yeah right. I thought I was just some boy your parents took pity on?" he countered.

Marcus head jerk back as he blinked rapidly, not expecting his own words to be thrown at him like that. "I was angry," he stated.

"And I'm late for class," Oliver told him before starting to walk away. "Oh and Flint," he called after a moment. Marcus looked to him before Oliver dropped his bag to the floor, uncovering his new House patch. Oliver then smirked as he saw the expression on Marcus' face. "Yeah, that's right. I wonder who Chelsie will be more proud of when she wakes up? The brother who made her House or the brother who got detention his first night back?"

Marcus released a low growl as he watched Oliver walk away. He couldn't believe it, how in the world did Oliver make the same House as his sister when he hadn't?

Marcus had been so scared the night of his sorting as the hat was placed on his head. The Sorting Hat had told him, that he had an untapped ambition, and a remarkable will to please, but only on his own terms. Marcus remembered smiling as the hat mentioned and compared him to his sister, but frowned as it also said, though he was brave, he was also rash and didn't always think things through. It then told him he would do well in, as it yelled out, Slytherin.

Though he didn't show it as he hopped off the chair heading to the Slytherin table, he was devastated, what would Chelsie say? Her own brother in the rival House of Gryffindor? He remembered writing Oliver about it, who in turned, told him to look on the bright side, at least he didn't have to make nice with those Weasley boys everyday sitting in the same common room.

Marcus then finally made his way to his first class. He slipped in unnoticed and took a seat next to Terrence, who had saved a seat for him as he had asked. "You look beat, what's wrong?"

"I'm down by ten," was all he said.

To Be Continued. . .

10 - Lingerin Shadows

Chapter Ten: Lingerin Shadows

"He's the best person for the job, you can't deny that, Charlie," spoke one of Charlie Weasley's teammates, Emily Pan, who played Seeker.

"He hates my guts. There's no way he's going to want to be my successor," the seventh year voiced his concerns as he and Emily rested on his bed within the dormitories.

"I know you and Oliver have always been at odds." She then made a curious face. "Even if I don't understand why. . . but he loves this game," Emily reassured him. "So just submit his name to McGonagal. I'm sure once he knows he's been made Captain, all will be forgiven."

"I don't know," he shook his head, as he ran his fingers through his dark red hair.

"Tell me, why did you make him Keeper in the first place?" she asked.

Charlie, with the question, straightened up a bit. He then lowered his head as he closed his eyes. "Honestly," he let out a big breath, "it was out of guilt."

Emily looked at him curiously, guilt being the last answer she expected. "From what?" she asked.

He took a moment before he answered. "Remember our very first Quidditch game?" Emily only nodded her head. "Remember that accident with Chelsie?"

She thought back, knowing Charlie was still very hard on himself about that day. "Yeah, but it was like you said, it was an accident." She then shrugged. "But what does that have to do with Oliver?"

"They're siblings," he told her.

Emily looked a little taken back by the news. "What?"

"Yeah." Charlie fell back onto his bed before tucking his hands under head. "I would never forgive anyone who hurt one of my brothers or sister." He licked his lips, which all of sudden felt dry. "So I've never expected something from Oliver, I wouldn't give myself," he explained.

"Wait a second," Emily began as she lowered herself next to Charlie, resting on her stomach. "I thought Chelsie's last name was Flint."

"It is," he confirmed. "That fifth year Chaser on Slytherin, is also her brother."

"Oh," was all she could say at the discovery. "So Wood and Flint are brothers?" she said in disbelief.

“With the way they treat each other, you would never guess it. So they must have different dads or something,” she guessed.

“Beats me,” was Charlie's response as he shrugged. “But how they act towards each other, probably has something do to with being in different Houses. Split loyalty and all.”

“No, I don't think that's it. I think it goes beyond something as silly as being in different Houses. In fact, I think even if they were in the same House, that hostility between them would still be there,” Emily suggested.

“Hmm,” he mulled it over. “I guess we'll never know.”

OoOoO

It was an hour before curfew as students, one by one, started to gather their things and leave the library. Two students who made no indication that they were going anywhere were two fifth year Slytherin boys by the names of Marcus Flint and Terrence Higgs. Terrence placed his hand over his mouth as he tried to stifle back a yawn. The two of them had been in the library every day for the last two weeks. Honestly, Terrence didn't need all this extra studying, he was doing well in all of his classes and thought the up coming O.W.L.s would be a breeze.

With that thought, Terrence slightly looked up from his book to glance over at Marcus who was sitting across from him. He seemed stressed - scratch that - he passed stressed two days ago. These days his fuse was extremely short and he was blowing up at the slightest thing. Which meant Quidditch practices were a living hell, as Marcus had been made Captain at the beginning of the term, due to an injury of the former Captain, who took a Bludger to the head, thanks to an overeager Second Year, by the name of Weasley.

After the Captain named her successor, Marcus cut the remaining two girls from the team and gave them absolutely no reason for it except that they were girls. This did not go over well with a lot of members of Marcus' own house. He was getting so much backlash and complaints about it, that finally many took it to their Head of House, Professor Snape. Marcus went in to speak to him and about half an hour later, Snape announced that Marcus' decision stood and that he didn't want to hear anymore of it or else he would have to take action.

Later, Terrence had asked what Marcus had spoken to Snape about. Marcus told him, that he explained that he wasn't a sexist pig, as he had been called and much worse, but that he was concerned about the females on his team, and how reckless he believed the Weasley brothers to be. He had explained to Snape, what he already knew about his sister, and what had just occurred with their recently former Captain. Marcus didn't want that on his watch and told him as long as he was Captain and there was a 'snot-nose, dirty red-headed' Weasley on any Quidditch team, there would be no females on his own. Terrence, along with anyone else who had happened to find out the true reason for the new lineup, was surprised by the answer.

Since that discussion, things had lightened up for a little while, but then a new presser had taken its

place. Marcus was worried about the upcoming exams. He hadn't said anything, his pride too strong, but he was struggling and determined to pass at all cost as he would drag Terrence with him to the library, where they would spend hours. Marcus spent most of his time writing and rewriting the same information over and over, trying to commit them to memory. Terrence was worried about him. When it came to Quidditch his mind was as sharp as ever, it was like nothing existed outside of it, but as soon as they came back to the earth, you could see the weight of the world land on Marcus' shoulders.

He wasn't sleeping properly, as one of their roommates had discovered as he had woken up in the middle of the night to find Marcus, studying by the light of his wand. The roommate didn't think much of it at first, but he was a light sleeper, and the light kept him up. So eventually he went to talk to Terrence, because going to Marcus would have been like signing your own Death Certificate these days. Terrence said he would see what he could do.

Terrence sighed as he realized it was now or never. "Oi, Flint," Terrence called softly.

Marcus looked up from his book for only a moment before looking back down. "What?" he responded after he finished up a statement.

"It's getting late, why don't we call it a night," he suggested.

"Is it curfew?" Marcus asked before looking at his watch. He frowned. "We got forty-five minutes." He then added, "Don't rush me."

"I've been talking to Jones," Terrence mentioned their roommate. "He tells me you haven't been sleeping."

"Well, Jones should mind his own damn business," Marcus said bitterly.

"You can't keep going on like this, Marc," he tried to reason with him. "Yes, these exams are important, but if you don't start to slow down, at this rate, you are bound to do more damage than help."

Marcus looked up at him and set down his quill. His face was serious as he spoke, "I know what you are trying to do. Don't talk to me like that. You're not my mother."

Terrence leaned in, a rare anger rising in his voice. "That's right, I'm not your mother. I'm your friend. I don't have to care about your well being, but I do. So I am telling you," he paused. "Close that book. Put it in your bag. March your arse out of this library and go to bed. And I know this is a foreign concept to someone as slow as you, but sleep, dammit," he told him.

As he finished, Terrence could have sworn he saw a strange expression flicker onto Marcus' face, but it had happened so quickly that Terrence thought that his own tired mind was playing with him. "You- you think I'm slow?" Marcus' face was patient at first as he spoke the question softly, but then an all too familiar expression rose onto his features. Terrence leaned back as Marcus got up out of his chair. He placed both hands on the table as he leered over Terrence. They were fifteen now and no longer was Marcus a small little boy. He had grown considerably his time at Hogwarts, and those who didn't fear the one who had been considered to be just on the right side of sane, back in his Second Year, did now, if only by his size alone.

"Listen here you little piece of shoote," Marcus began. "You don't want to be here, fine. I'm not making you stay-"

"Had me fooled," Terrence dared to speak back. "You never give me a choice in anything you find yourself asking of me," Terrence gave him a knowing look. It was a look that made Marcus falter, if only for a moment.

"Don't go there," he finally warned, now only noticing the eyes of some of their fellow students on them.

Terrence stood abruptly. "Fine." He gather his things silently and started to pack them away.

Marcus only watched for a moment before his shoulders dropped. "Terrence," he called him, but the other said nothing as he continued to pack. "Terry," he said gently as he reached for him from across the table.

The other Slytherin yanked his arm away from the other's grasp. "No!" he told him fiercely. "I'm tired and I'm leaving," he announced before walking off and out the door.

Marcus groaned in frustration as he sat back down to pick up where he left off. "You should be nicer to your pet," Marcus heard from behind him. He turned around to see Oliver leaning against one of the columns, seemingly reading a small paper back book in his hands. "If you're not carefully you're going to end up losing the only friend you have here," Oliver told him.

"Go away. I don't have time for you," was all Marcus said as he turned back to his book, which caused Oliver to look up from his own. He wasn't used to being ignored after such a comment.

"He's right, you know," Oliver began after a moment. "You're not looking well these days. A good night's rest wouldn't hurt you."

"I said, I'm busy, Wood," Marcus repeated himself. "I still have three chapters to cover and thanks to Higgs, I'm running behind," he told him. "I need to understand," he whispered to himself. "I just need to pass."

Oliver heard Marcus mumbling to himself, but didn't understand his exact words. He watched as Marcus dipped his quill in a nearby bottle of ink and began to write down notes. Oliver then blinked surprisingly as he watched Marcus do something he hadn't seen him do in years. His right hand found the curls of his head and slowly started to form into his fist. His hand trembled as he pulled at his hair.

Marcus gasped loudly as he felt a hand on top of his own . He pulled away as he looked up at Oliver. Oliver said nothing at first at Marcus' confused face. Oliver then reached over and picked up Marcus' book. Letting go of his hand, he pulled out the seat next to him. "I'll help you," he finally spoke.

"You'll help me?" Marcus said the words in disbelief as he watched the Gryffindor look at his book. "You're a Fourth Year, you don't understand what I'm studying."

Oliver shrugged not looking at him. "We'll figure it out together."

“Why help me?” Marcus couldn't help, but ask.

“Because I only play against the best, and to do that I need to keep you qualified to play Captain,” he told him finally looking at him.

Marcus, nodded his head, almost in a defeated manner. “Okay,” he finally whispered as he leaned over the book with Oliver, who spoke slowly and softly to him as he explained a complexed concept concerning the subject. As Marcus focused on what Oliver was saying, he knew that they both knew, the reason he gave for helping him was nothing, but a crock of lies. Marcus had a head for strategy when it came to Quidditch, and there was no way Snape would force Marcus to leave the game, even if he didn't qualify. So the two boys studied, each knowing, but never voicing, the true reason Oliver was helping him, and it was because, well. . . *it's what brothers do, right?*

To Be Continued. . .

11 - Crashing

Chapter Eleven: Crashing

It was a Saturday evening as Oliver sat silently at a large table that consisted of his family members. It was the end of his sixth year at Hogwarts and the school year had gone well enough for him, grade wise, and Quidditch wise, as he had a seeker who hadn't fail to win him a game yet. His year, concerning Marcus, was like it was every year, strained. It also didn't help that Marcus and Terrence finally had their falling out as Oliver had predicted, making Marcus become even more unstable than he was before. Oliver almost felt sorry for the Slytherin House. . . *almost*.

Putting that aside, Oliver's grandfather was glad to have his eldest grandchild home and made sure a huge feast was prepared for Oliver when he arrived. Oliver watched as his aunts, uncles, and younger cousins ate and talked lively among themselves. It would have been picture perfect if it weren't for one thing. . . his mother.

She was supposed to have come and picked him up. He had been looking forward to seeing her his entire trip on the train. Then as the long journey came to an end and he stepped off the train, the first person he saw was Gale Flint. They made eye contact for a moment and she smiled sadly at him as she gave him a small wave. Oliver almost waved back, but didn't have time as he watched Marcus almost break down as he reached his mother. He looked so worn and tired as he wrapped his arms around her and she comforted him. As she stroked her son's head, she looked up at Oliver one more time before she Apparated, taking Marcus with her.

Oliver then looked around for his own mother, but was disappointed to see that she hadn't come to pick him up, but his aunt Enatina. He asked her where she was and Enatina simply told him that something came up that she had to handle. So he went with his aunt to the family estate where the rest of his family was happily waiting for him to come home.

Oliver had grown to love his family, but all he really wanted was the attention of his mother that always seemed to be out of his reach. He thought when she came back for him, that everything was going to be different. He thought he would never be left alone again, but in truth he just felt like he was passed from one family to another.

After dinner, the family insisted that he stay a little longer, but he told them he was tired and just wanted to get home to his own bed. They protested a little longer, but eventually Oliver won out before having someone Apparate him outside of the home he and his mother now shared. "Mum?" Oliver called out, entering the seemingly empty house, after closing the front door behind him. He sighed when he heard nothing.

"Oliver, is that you?" he finally heard Siliva upstairs. Oliver made a curious face, her voice sounded far away and weak.

"Yeah, it's me," he responded back as he followed the sound of her voice up the stairs. Lights turned on as he traveled towards his mother's bedroom. Outside the close door he knocked and then turned the knob and stepped in. "Why weren't you there to pick me-" he stopped in the middle of his question as Siliva came into his sight. She was sitting on the floor, leaning against the bed as she breathed heavily. Her hair was all awry and her face was covered in scratches and bruises. Her robes were torn and tattered as she held her stomach tightly. "Mum!" Oliver quickly made his way to her before dropping to his knees to help her up. "What happened? Who did this to you?" he asked as she laid down.

"I need my medication," was her only response to his question.

Oliver gently ran his fingers across Siliva's face. "You need a Healer," he told her as he removed her hand from her side and looked through the hole in her robe, which looked as if it had been burned off. It was a huge black and blue bruise that seem to cover her whole stomach. "This looks bad."

"My medication," she said again, indicating her nightstand. Oliver turned to it. "In the drawer," she told him.

Oliver reached over and pulled the top drawer. Inside were several small zip-lock bags full of a white powder. Oliver had seen this stuff before a few years back and had asked Siliva about it. She had only told him it was Muggle medication that she needed. Oliver took out one of the bags out before closing the drawer. "I don't think this stuff helps you," he finally told her. Every time he had seen her after taking her 'medication' she always appeared worse off than before.

"Of course it helps me," she told him angrily. "I need it, it relaxes me," she told him, taking the bag from his hand.

"I want you to see a Healer," Oliver tried to tell her, but she wasn't listening as she sat up, cringing in pain as she did so, and opened back up the drawer again to pull something out of it. Oliver watched as Siliva poured some of the bag's contents onto the table before cutting it into several small strings. Oliver had seen this all before during his visits home for summer and Christmas break and with every visit his mother always looked paler, sicker, weaker, and he was tired of seeing her wasting away and not seeking the proper help. They had the money now and all she did was spend it on this useless Muggle medicine.

"Stop it!" Oliver demanded as Siliva was about to snort the white powder up her nose. He knocked it off the desk and it flew like dust into the air and onto the floor.

Siliva looked to him angrily. "What is the hell is wrong with you!" she yelled at him. "I need that!" She reached into the drawer and pulled out another packet.

"I said, no!" He took the bag out of his.

Siliva then slapped him hard against the face, causing him to drop the bag on the floor. "Get out my room," she told him. Oliver held his face as his narrowed eyes looked upon his mother. He first reached for the bag on the floor, he then reached into the drawer and gathered the bags into his arms. "What are you doing?" she asked him frantically. "What are you doing!" She grabbed onto his shirt as he began to

walk away. He paid her no mind as she was dragged out the bed. "Oliver, stop! What are you doing?" she cried. "I'm your mum, dammit, listen to me!"

Her words stopped Oliver dead in his tracks. "My mum? My mum!" he yelled as he finally yanked her grip off of him. He looked at her as she lay on the floor. "You may have given birth to me, but you *are not* my mum," he told her cruelly. "You don't even know how to pretend to be one."

"Don't say such things. I'm a good mother," she tried to convince herself. "A good mother."

"Yeah, alright." Oliver rolled his eyes before continuing down the hall towards the bathroom. "I should have never come back to you. I should have never broken my promise to Marcus," he said to himself. "I should have stayed with Dad and Gale."

"He was a Death Eater!" Siliva yelled as Oliver made it to the doorway of the bathroom.

"What?" Oliver looked at her curiously. "Who?"

"Flint," Siliva said breathlessly as she slowly rose from the floor and leaned against the wall. "Alvin Flint," she hissed.

Oliver shook his head. "How much of this stuff have you take today?" he asked referring to the powder in his arms. He then stepped into the bathroom and started pouring the packets into the toilet.

A moment later, Siliva rested against the door frame and watched her son pour the drugs into the toilet. "Do what you want to it. I can always get more," she told him.

Oliver said nothing as he flushed the last of it and rose. Siliva stood in his way as she tried to leave. "Move."

"I wasn't lying," she began, her son not making eye contact with her. "Flint was a Death Eater. He worked for You-Know-Who."

"You're lying. Dad is a good man," he said in a way that almost dared her to question him.

"Stop calling that man your Dad!" she yelled infuriated. "Your father was named Oliver Card and he was a good man!" she made clear. "He died at the hands of Death Eaters. Death Eaters just like Alvin Flint was!"

Then as she spoke something occurred to Oliver. "Why do you keep referring to him in the past tense?" he asked softly.

A shiver ran down Oliver's spine as he watched Siliva. "Because I finally got him." Oliver shook his head, he didn't understand. "Didn't you ever wonder why I was always gone when you were a little boy?" He only looked at her. "Didn't you ever wonder what mummy did for a living?" Oliver only looked confused. "I was actually paid to go out and kill the bloody bastards who took your father away from us," she explained. "I was good at what I did. I was the best when I left the Organization and I still am." Tears filled her eyes and slowly ran down her cheeks. "I even came out of retirement, to go after the

ones who were there when your father was killed. Guess who was among them?"

As Oliver heard Siliva's words he didn't know what to think or what to believe, but as she wiped away her tears and a look he had never seen before entered her eyes, a sickening feeling came over him and he knew she wasn't lying, but he still could not help the words that slipped from his lips. "It's not true. It can't be."

OoOoO

Marcus was in his seventh year and it was the day before N.E.W.Ts. He was alone in his dorm as he studied. As he did for his O.W.Ls, he studied to the point of making himself sick. It was his last year and this test meant everything. Marcus then sighed as he allowed his book to rest on his lap and rest his head on his headboard. He looked over at Terrence's bed, or what used to be Terrence's bed.

Terrence had requested for a room change at the beginning of the year after Marcus had come up to him the first night they had returned. Marcus had handed him a piece of parchment and asked him to sign it. Terrence asked what it was and Marcus told him it was a request for resignation. Marcus knew that Terrence wanted to be a Professional Quidditch Player and that it wouldn't look good if Marcus straight up fired him from the team, so resignation was the next best choice.

Terrence didn't understand, he didn't want to quit the team. Marcus then explained the situation that was at hand when it came to Lucius Malfoy and his son, Draco who was only a Second Year. Terrence was not happy to learn that during his last year he was being replace by a kid who could barely play the game. More so, he couldn't believe that Marcus had done him so wrong, he was his best friend for crying out loud. Friends weren't suppose to turn on each other for something as lowly as a set of new brooms. Their argument could be heard all down the hall of their dormitory and when it was over, it was over and the two hadn't said more than a word to each other the entire year.

Marcus would never admit it out loud, but he missed him, and he knew he was wrong. Having the latest and fastest broom for his team didn't make up for experience, which was something Terrence did have over Draco. It was the worst decision he had ever made. It not only greatly lowered his chances at the cup, but destroyed a relationship with someone he should have valued more.

Marcus then once again picked up his book and began to read over his material. He hadn't been at it for long when he remembered his mother's letter. It had been given to him that morning when the family owl arrived, but he had quickly stuffed it in his pocket as he was almost done with one of his subjects and didn't want to be distracted.

He figured he needed a break anyway and so threw his book down his bed before reaching into his pocket to pull out the letter. He sat back and crossed one ankle over the other as he broke the seal and began to read. Not more than a few sentences into his letter Marcus bolted straight up and now gripped the letter tightly in both hands. He began to hyperventilate as he eyes frantically scanned over the letter. "It's not true. It can't be," he said himself as the color drained from his face. His father was dead, not just dead, but murdered.

Out in the Slytherin common room, Terrence was resting by the fireplace with some of his friends he had made that year in a small study group, but studying was the last thing on their minds as they laughed and joked around. Suddenly, there was a scream so loud and so fierce that it startled a lot of the people in the common room. "I think that's Flint," said one of the people sitting with Terrence's group.

"Why are you looking at me?" Terrence asked offended before picking up his book. He then pretended to read it, but as he heard Marcus' cries, he ached to see what was wrong, but his pride would not allow it and so with everything he had, blocked out his former best friend's cries. "Flint is no longer my concern," Terrence said annoyed at those who were still looking at him as if he should go check on the other. With those words everyone went back to what they were doing and left Marcus to survive his demons alone.

END FLASHBACK

To Be Continued. . .

12 - Never Far

Chapter Twelve: Never Far

Oliver sobbed openly as he passed the cup to Harry. He had done it, had beaten Marcus, at his own bloody game, so why wasn't he happy? Oliver couldn't help but ask himself as he realized the tears he shed weren't ones of joy as they should have been.

He then looked across the pitch, as best as he could, as the crowd surrounding the winning team began to grow. He was then able to see the defeated Slytherin team as they tread off to their locker room to lick their wounds. Oliver was then surprised as Marcus looked his way and did the last thing he ever expected of him at this moment, he smiled. He gave Oliver a pure and genuine smile. Oliver then watched as Marcus fell into step behind the rest of his team.

Oliver sat alone within his office located in the Gryffindor locker room. He stared at the cup in front of him. "Why aren't I happy?" he asked himself out loud as he reached out and touched it just to make sure it was real before he had to go put it in the trophy room for his House. He then began to wonder why he had worked so hard for this moment and as he sat there he remembered Marcus' words from just a few months ago. . .

"I don't even recognize you anymore."

. . . and then some of his own words.

"HARRY, THIS IS NO TIME TO BE A GENTLEMEN! KNOCK HER OFF HER BROOM IF YOU HAVE TO!"

When had he become so blind and cruel? Issuing an order that was even beneath Marcus?

Had he changed that much?

"This wasn't you! This wasn't us!"

Oliver scoffed at the memory. What the hell had Marcus been talking about? Of course Quidditch was them it had always been them. Always! From the day they met until the day, until the day. . . Oliver pushed the cup to the side before resting his arms on the desk and his head in his hands.

"We were brothers once, but that didn't matter to you, did it?"

Marcus would never understand, it did matter. It was the only thing that mattered. . . and it was the reason he couldn't stay with the Flints. Oliver's excuse was his mother, he wanted so badly to believe that the two of them could be a family, but after truly experiencing what that was, Oliver knew he would never have it. His mother loved him, he knew, but not enough keep her promise. It lasted about a week,

and it was the happiest he could ever imagine being, but then things started to fall back into place of what they used to be and he resented her for it.

He was alone again, well not really, more like passed off. He spent a lot of time with his grandparents and his aunts and uncles. And when Siliva was home, she was always taking that Muggle medication of hers to point where she was making herself sick. Oliver tried to help her, but it was useless as he just grew more angry at her.

Being of age, he finally threw in the towel. He told her he didn't want to live like this anymore before packing his bags and leaving. Siliva, yelled and cried for Oliver to stay, telling him that she was his son and that he had to stay. Oliver remembered turning to her as he stood with the door opened, ready to leave and said, "So, now you finally understand what's it like to be the one begging."

His grandfather, knowing of his daughter's 'condition' understood Oliver and helped him find a place of his own, which he would help out with until he could pay for it on his own. Oliver didn't know why, but when his grandfather told him this, he broke down and cried, it had been so long since he had someone to depend on.

Oliver finally rose his head from his hands, noticing for the first time that he was still in his Quidditch gear. He sighed as he stood up and headed out of his office to his locker to change. His teammates were already gone and probably preparing a big celebration in the common room. Oliver wasn't very much up to that and so took his time as he undressed and headed to the showers to rinse the day off his body.

The water, which was a notch too high for Oliver, stung as it rained again his skin with a pressure that caused his flesh to redden as he bathed beneath it. Then suddenly, weak from the day, the brown headed boy fell slowly to his knees, his hands on the wall as he lowered his head and closed his eyes.

"I'm happy for you." Oliver's head snapped up when he heard the voice at the end of the shower room.

"Flint?" he spoke softly as he stood back up to turn off the water. "It's called knocking," Oliver said harshly as he wrapped a towel around his naked body. "What are you doing here anyway?"

Marcus turned his head as Oliver slightly began to approach him. "Only to say congratulations," he began, a slow yet bitter smile appearing on his face. "You're better than me in every way possible."

Oliver chuckled softly as he leaned over and grabbed a clean towel from beside Marcus, causing the other to once again look at him before running the towel through his hair. "Yeah, that's believable. My team won out there by the skin of their teeth. We got lucky today. . . you're still the better player," he admitted begrudgingly.

"It's not about you and me," Marcus told him. "It was a team effort out there and that's what you have." As he spoke Oliver realized that Marcus' breath was heavy, and his chest rose up and down rapidly.

"Have you been running?" Oliver asked, completely missing the other's last statement. "Did you run down here?" He wondered what would possess him to do such a thing.

Marcus than once again averted his eyes as his lip pursed together and his hand dug into his robes. Suspicious, Oliver took a step back, wondering if Marcus was going to pull out his wand and attack him when he was defenseless. Oliver then blinked rapidly in confusion as Marcus took out nothing more than a letter with the Flint family seal upon it, which was broken. "I-" Marcus' voice shook. "I- couldn't read it beyond the first sentence. It's from mum. . . about Chelsie," he shook his head. "I didn't like the way it began and I-" He swallowed hard as he was determined to keep some type of dignity as he continued. "And I didn't want to read it alone."

He then once again made eye contact with Oliver. "You're the only one here who can understand how I feel." Marcus turned his head as he wiped away tears with the palm of his hand. "After dad was-" he didn't want to finish that statement, which caused a deep seeded emotion of guilt to wash over Oliver. He knew what his mother had done. She had killed the only father he and Marcus had ever known.

"It's been a hard year for me and mum," Marcus admitted. "And I don't think I'm ready to read this." Marcus then held out his shaking hand out to Oliver so that he could take the letter. Oliver only stared at it. "Ollie. . ." Oliver expression was one of shock and surprise as he heard the nickname he had almost forgotten. "Please," he begged of him, now not caring that Oliver saw his tears. "I- I just can't."

Oliver eyes never left Marcus' as he realized he needed to be the strong one. Marcus needed that of him and so Oliver reached out and took the letter from the other's hand and opened it. He took a deep breath before lowering his head and reading the letter.

Marcus watched the other intensity as Oliver's eyes scanned the letter quickly from one side to the other. He watched as Oliver gasped loudly and covered his mouth with his hand as he continued to read. Marcus felt his heart grow large within his chest, as it longed to break free as he saw Oliver's tears. He slowly took a step back as he shook his head from side to side in disbelief.

Marcus wanted to run. He knew he wouldn't be able to take what Oliver was bound to tell him as he finally lowered the letter and then his hand from his mouth. "Mar-Mar-" Oliver tried to begin.

"No!" Marcus cut him off while taking another step back. "I know what you're going say. I can see it in your eyes." Marcus turned ready to leave the locker room as fast as he could, but was stopped when Oliver reached out and grabbed him. Marcus sobbed painfully as Oliver pulled him into his arms. He clung on to the Gryffindor as he lowered them both to the cold tiled floor of the shower room.

Oliver stoked the raven headed boy gently. "She's awake," he said through his tears, Marcus now realizing that what the other shed were tears of joy.

Marcus froze for a moment sniffing a little before he was able to speak. "What did you say?" he asked, on the verge of losing it again as he thought his mind was playing with him, allowing him to hear what he had desperately been wanting to hear for years.

Oliver took a hold of Marcus' shoulders and pushed him away far enough so that he could look upon his face. Oliver wanted him to see his smile as he repeated the words. "She's awake. Chelsie is awake. . . and she asked to see her brothers."

Marcus' looked dumbfounded. He had been expecting the worst, so much so, that it took his mind a

moment to process the news. "She's not- she's not dead?" He had to make sure this wasn't a dream.

"No," Oliver confirmed before he finally saw Marcus' blue eyes brighten, still filled with unshed tears, and a smile spread across his lips. He exhaled as he lowered his head on to Oliver's shoulder and began to cry again. Oliver only held him tighter and as he did he was reminded of when he first went to go live with the Flints.

"See this, Ollie? This is never far, this will always be here. . . if only you choose to accept it."

"I'm sorry," Oliver whispered. "I hurt a lot of people. People I never meant to hurt," he confessed. "Can you ever forgive me?"

Marcus pulled away as Oliver's hold on him loosen and his face felt with shame. Marcus dried his face before he spoke. "Took you long enough, didn't it?"

Oliver smiled as he knew that was Marcus' way of saying he was forgiven. "Yeah, it did." His smile then slowly slipped away as he drew closer to Marcus and placed a simply, gentle kiss upon his lips. "You were right, you know," he spoke with his eyes closed. "That very first kiss. . . I enjoyed it," he finally told him.

Marcus smiled back at him. "I knew it," he teased. "You were just too defensive about it."

"I gave myself away, huh?" he asked not really expecting an answer, as he went to kiss Marcus again, but was taken by surprised when Marcus pulled away.

Seeing the rejected look on his face, Marcus offered a quick response to his actions. "Please, don't take that the wrong way," he begged of him. "I'd kiss you back, but I'm kind of involved with someone." Oliver looked asking of him. "Higgs," he answered the unspoken question. "He came to see me at the end of last summer and we worked things out," he said happily.

Oliver nodded in understanding. "So, need help with your N.E.W.T.s?" he asked with a smile.

"That would be great," Marcus told him as they both began to rise from the floor and head back to the locker area. "Dammit!" Marcus seem to say out of nowhere.

"What?" Oliver looked confused.

"Chelsie is not going to believe you beat me in a fair game," he told him.

"Fair!" Oliver said in mock outrage. "You pulled out every dirty trick in the book this year. You even took advantage of a player's injury to get out of playing in the rain!"

Marcus threw his head back and laughed as he put an arm around Oliver shoulders. "God, that was hella funny. You should have seen your face. 'That's not possible!'" He laughed again.

Oliver sulked. "I don't sound like that." He tried to hold his angry expression, but couldn't as Marcus' joy and laughter were contiguous.

Oliver then looked to Marcus in a bit of an awe. They had been at odds for so long, but now, at this moment, if felt like they had always been together, that they had always been brothers. Oliver had been running from it for so long, not believing he deserved what the Flints were trying to offer him, but now he saw that he offered them something too, and for all the doubts that he had, he now saw there was no need for it. Because when it came down to it, even at odds, the pact that they had made still stood strong, because no matter where each of them stood, the other. . . was never far.

THE END