

## Chapter 5

Harry grunted as the air was knocked from his lungs and he was tossed across the room. His back hit the hard stone wall before he fell. Sharp pain shock through his right knee and elbow as he impacted the floor. Seeing another red Stunning Hex coming his way, he scrambled out of the way.

Raising his wand, Harry turned to Tonks just as she lazily fired a Disarming Hex.

“Protego!” he shouted.

The spell splashed against his shield in a flash of sparks. Dropping his shield, he twisted out of the way of another hex and brought his wand to bear.

“Stupify!”

Tonks knocked his spell aside with a negligent flick of her wand. Harry heard a round of chuckles behind her and looked over to see a dozen trainees waiting against the back wall.

*Great, Harry thought sarcastically. Now everyone get to see me get my ass kicked.*

He dodged a couple of more spells from Tonks before she suddenly jerked her wand backwards. Prepared for a visible spell, he was completely caught off guard when his foot was yanked forward. When the force pulling him stopped abruptly, he landed heavily on his back.

“Oof,” Harry grunted.

He tried to get to his feet, but only managed to get to one knee before Tonks shot off another Disarming Hex. Helplessly, he watched as his wand was torn from his grip. Reaching out

instinctively, both he and Tonks watched in surprise as his wand stopped between them before shooting back into Harry's hand.

"Expelliarmus!" he shouted.

Busy gaping at him, Tonks barely parried his hex in time. Gritting his teeth, Harry pushed himself to his feet painfully.

"That's enough," Moody called.

Sagging in relief, Harry panted heavily and slumped in exhaustion.

"That was brilliant!" Tonks grinned.

"That was shite," Moody said, hobbling his way over.

"He did very well for a fifth year," Matilda argued.

"Well, he isn't going to be fighting fifth years," Moody grumbled, coming to a stop in front of Harry and eyeing him closely. "Your spell knowledge is pathetic, you can't cast silently, and you spent more time throwing yourself around the room than on your feet."

Harry flushed at the painfully honest description as Moody leaned on his staff.

"The first thing you need to do is learn nonverbal casting," Moody continued. "You not going to get anywhere shouting out everything you're going to do before you do it. While you're working on that, learn as many spells as you can. Even if you don't use them, you need to know what a spell does to know how to react. The spells you do use, you need to master. Got it?"

“Got it,” Harry said, blushing as the trainee laughed quietly.

“That said, you showed a hell of a lot of heart,” Moody said. “You got you’re arse kicked around this room for over an hour, and you never complained or gave up. Which is more than I can say for this lot.”

The trainees stopped laughing when Moody jerked his thumb at them.

“Even with the lack of knowledge, he still put up a better fight than most of our trainees,” Matilda smirked.

“Aye,” Moody agreed. “Speaking of which, we need to get to work with this useless lot.”

“Right,” Harry said. “Thanks, Moody. I appreciate the advice.”

“Anytime, lad,” Moody replied, patting his shoulder.

Nodding gratefully, Harry waved to Matilda and made his way gingerly toward the door.

“You did great,” Tonks grinned, swinging her arm over his shoulders as they walked past the trainees.

“Yeah, great,” Harry snorted.

“Listen up, you lot!” Moody shouted. “You work half as hard as Potter just did, and you might actually learn something today.”

“See, even Moody thinks so,” Tonks smiled. “Look, for a fifth year, you did amazing. Sure, you might not know a lot of spells, and you can’t cast silently, but you never lost.”

Harry scoffed, "We both know you were taking it easy on me."

"Maybe a little," Tonks smirked. "You still did that really cool wandless summoning. When did you learn to do that anyway?"

"A few days ago," Harry said, wincing as his ribs ached. "It just sort of happened."

"It was still impressive," Tonks told him as they entered the Auror offices. "Well, I guess we should get back to work. If you need help with anything, let me know. Learning nonverbal casting can be pretty frustrating until you get the hang of it."

"Thanks, Tonks," Harry said.

"You're welcome," Tonks grinned.

Reaching up, she ruffled his hair before disappearing amongst the cubicles. Running a hand through his hair in an attempt to straighten it, Marcus and Kim fell in behind him as he made his way to the elevator. After pushing the button for his floor, Harry rolled his shoulder with a wince.

"Do you want me to call a healer?" Kim asked.

"No. I'm fine," Harry said.

Kim sighed, "Why do men have to be all macho when they get hurt?"

"It's just a few bruises," Harry said.

“Yeah, and they make a balm for that,” she smirked.

Harry rolled his eyes as the elevator door opened. Penny looked up with a smile when she saw him, then frowned when she noticed him walking gingerly.

“You okay?” she asked when he reached her desk.

“I’m fine,” Harry said. “Just a bit sore.”

“You were gone for a while. How did it go?” Penny asked.

“Not great,” Harry admitted. “Tonks looked like she had fun tossing me around the room, though.”

Smiling, Penny shook her head and took his hand.

“Are you going to keep training with her?” Penny asked.

“When I have time,” Harry replied. “Unfortunately, I don’t have a lot of that at the moment.”

As he finished speaking, the elevator opened. Looking over his shoulder, Harry saw Amelia, Kingsley, and a thin, blonde witch with short, spiky blonde hair and a scar over her right, pale blue eye.

“Minister, you remember Kingsley Shacklebolt, and this is Connie Hammer,” Amelia said. “We’ve finished that report I told you about. Can we have a few moments of your time?”

“Of course,” Harry nodded before turning to Penny. “Can you make sure we’re not disturbed unless it’s an emergency?”

“Sure,” Penny nodded.

Smiling gratefully at her, he led them to his office. Shutting the door, he brought up the newly restored wards around the room.

“After discussing your plan with Kingsley and Connie and coming up with a plan, we’ve determined that we have sufficient numbers for it to work. Barely,” Amelia said. “Connie.”

Pulling a folder out of her pocket, she opened it up and spread several pieces of paper across his desk.

“I’ve reviewed our number of active Aurors, and we have two choices,” Connie said. “If we use three man teams to execute arrests, we have a chance to catch everyone on the list of names we got from your memory and McNair’s interrogation. However, that’s smaller than what we normally recommend. If we sent four man teams and let a few of the smaller names go, I feel it gives us a better chance of successful arrests.”

Sitting back in his chair, Harry rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“What do you two think?” Harry asked.

“I agree with Connie,” Amelia said. “It would also keep our Aurors safer if they encounter resistance.”

“I would even go further,” Kingsley said. “Some of the people we’re arresting, like Malfoy and Nott, should have even more Aurors.”

Picking up three pieces of parchment, Connie handed them to him.

"These are the three arrangements we've come up with," she said.

Glancing over them, he set aside the one listing three man teams and concentrated on the other two. As much as he wanted to arrest as many Death Eaters as possible, Kingsley made a good point. Catching someone like Malfoy was far more important than catching so low ranking, petty criminal.

"Let's go with this one," Harry said, handing back Kingsley's arrangement.

Nodding, Connie took the parchment and made a note.

"Now we need to work out the timing," Amelia said. "I suggest we do it in two days, during the next Wizengamot meeting."

"That soon?" Harry asked, surprised.

"The faster we move, the better," Connie said. "Outside of the three of us, no one else will know about this plan until just before it's executed. It will give the Death Eaters less time to get word of what we're doing."

"Even with the larger teams, surprise is still our best weapon," Amelia added. "If the Death Eaters catch on before our Aurors arrive, they'll be walking into a death trap."

Sighing, Harry rubbed a hand over his face.

"What's the plan?" he asked.

"At four PM we lock down the Ministry with the story that someone was attacked," Connie said. "We know the names of the Death Eaters within the ranks of the Aurors, and they'll be the first to be arrested. Once every Auror has been checked for the Dark Mark, the remaining Aurors will

arrest any Ministry employee on our list, including the three Wizengamot members we discovered. We expect this to be done within an hour. From there, the Aurors will regroup, and each team will be given their target in private. Amelia, Matilda, and you will coordinate everything from Auror Headquarters.”

“What happens if a team gets into trouble?” Harry asked.

“We have three backup teams that can assist anyone who needs help,” Amelia replied. “It’s not ideal, but it’s the best we can do under the circumstances.”

“And what about Voldemort?” Harry asked.

“Our intelligence says he’s currently out of the country,” Kingsley said, his dark eyes catching Harry’s meaningfully.

Nodding, Harry looked over the details of the plan thoughtfully.

“How do you three feel about this?” he asked after a moment.

“It’s a risk, but I think it’s our best option,” Amelia replied.

“I agree,” Connie added. “This could be our only chance to deal a significant blow to the Death Eaters.”

Kingsley nodded, and they all looked at Harry expectantly. Taking a deep breath and feeling an almost unbearable weight settle on his shoulder, he nodded.

“Let’s do it,” Harry said.



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Hours later, Harry sat in front of the fire with a glass of Firewhiskey in his hand.

“Harry,” Penny called.

Looking back towards the door, he gave a small smile and turned back to the fire.

“Hey,” he said softly.

“Everything okay?” she asked, approaching the couch.

“You remember that plan I told you about?” he asked, then continued when she nodded. “It starts in two days.”

Giving him a sympathetic look, Penny sat down and took his hand.

“For what it’s worth, I think you’re doing the right thing,” she told him.

“I hope so,” Harry sighed. “A lot of people could die if I get things wrong.”

“And if you get things right, you’ll save even more,” Penny argued.

Smiling, Harry gave her hand a squeeze.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Penny said suddenly. “I ran out and picked you up some Bruise Balm while I was at lunch.”

Reaching into her pocket, she pulled out a small metal tin.

“You didn’t have to do that,” Harry said softly.

“I know,” Penny smiled. “Now, where are your bruises?”

“On my back and arms, mostly,” Harry said.

“Then take off your shirt,” Penny said, popping open the tin.

A bit nervously, Harry shucked off his robe and unbuttoned his shirt. Glancing over at Penny, his confidence was boosted when he saw her lick her lips while staring at his chest. Then, she winced when she saw the large bruises on his shoulder.

“Oh, ow,” she said, gently pushing his arm with her finger to turn him to the side. “Harry, your entire back is one big bruise. Here, lay down.”

When Penny stood, Harry kicked off his shoes and laid face down on the couch. A moment later, she straddled his hips and sat down on his legs. Scooping out a large dollop of thick, yellowish cream, she rubbed it between her hands. Harry inhaled sharply when she began rubbing it into his back. His skin tingled sharply, almost painfully, where it contacted a bruise before gradually fading to a soothing warmth.

“That feels good,” Harry groaned.

“Good,” Penny said, her hands working their way up to his shoulders.

Harry closed his eyes and relaxed as she went from rubbing Bruise Balm into his bruise to massaging his entire back and arms.

“Feel better?” Penny asked.

“Much,” Harry said.

Smiling, he spun around underneath her and rested his hands on her hips. Penny smiled back and leaned down, kissing him softly. Quickly, that kiss turned into a full blown snog as Harry ran his hands over her back and enjoyed the feeling of her large breasts pressed against his bare chest.

“Am I interrupting?”

Penny sat up quickly and looked over the couch before sighing. Sitting up, Harry saw Daphne standing in the doorway with her arms crossed and a smirk on her lips.

“I was just helping Harry put balm on his bruises,” Penny said, climbing off of him.

“With your lips?” Daphne asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Did you need something?” Harry asked as Penny blushed.

“I thought you might like to see this,” Daphne said, holding up a folded newspaper. “It’s an advanced copy of tomorrow’s issue. My mother sent it for you.”

Quickly putting his shirt back on, Harry took the paper and sighed. He’d spent four hours giving an interview to Evangeline. She was frighteningly good at getting him to relax and open up about his life. Harry had told her more than he’d planned to, and he was honestly worried about what she’d write about him.

“Well, are you going to read it?” Daphne asked as Hermione walked into the office.

Harry sighed and opened the paper while Penny and Hermione both pressed in close on either side of him so they could read over his shoulder.

### *The True Story of Harry Potter*

*By Evangeline Greengrass*

*Yesterday, I had the privilege of sitting down and talking one on one with Harry Potter, 18, the Boy-Who-Lived. While Harry has been known the world over for his miraculous survival at the age of 2, not much is known about his life until he reentered the Wizarding World for his first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Since then, rumors and stories abound, but we've had little confirmation from the man himself.*

*Given how the sensationalist lies spread about him during the Triwizard Tournament by former Daily Prophet reporter Rita Skeeter, that's understandable. (More on page 3.)*

*I have already documented the extraordinary circumstances that led to Harry becoming the youngest Minister for Magic in history, but I was interested in getting to know the real Harry Potter. What kind of man is our current Minister for magic? Finding those answers has left me shocked, astounded, but most importantly, hopeful for the future.*

*Our story begins in Harry's first year, when he met his best friend, Hermione Granger, 19, in an improbable way...*

Reading on, Harry was relieved she kept to the truth. There were a few things he wished he hadn't talked about so openly, but Evangeline never lied or even exaggerated what she wrote about him.

"That's really good," Hermione said when she'd finished reading.

"This is all true?" Penny asked.

Harry nodded.

“I had no idea school was like that for you,” she said softly.

“No one did,” Daphne said.

Harry shrugged while Penny wrapped an arm around his waist.

“It’s not something I like to talk about,” he said.

“Potter, do you have any idea what this will do?” Daphne asked, pointing to the paper.

When Harry looked at her curiously, she sighed and shook her head.

“This is going to be the biggest public relations success in history,” Daphne said.

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It turned out Daphne wasn’t exaggerating. Harry’s office was filled with letters from people thanking him for protecting Hogwarts and apologizing for not believing him sooner. Marcus even told him that they had to station Aurors in the Atrium to keep the well wishers and photographers away.

Harry didn’t have much time to dwell on that, however. He was too busy working with Amelia to plan the biggest raid ever executed in British magical history on home soil. It did give him an idea, though. Which was why he invited Evangeline to the next Wizengamot meeting.

“Hello, Harry,” Evangeline smiled, her tight robes once again displaying her incredible figure.

“Eva,” Harry said, shaking her hand. “Thank you for coming.”

“I don’t suppose you could tell me why you asked me to come today?” she asked.

“I’m afraid I can’t, but you’ll find out soon enough,” Harry told her before gesturing to the courtroom. “Shall we.”

With a dazzling smile, she walked into the courtroom with Harry close behind. When he took his seat, he had trouble focusing on the meeting. Fortunately, he wasn’t required to say much. Finally, after a long, agonizing wait, he got the message he’d been waiting for.

“The Floo is disabled. Bring up the wards,” Connie’s voice said through the Communications Charm she’d put on him that morning.

Closing his eyes, Harry took a deep breath and reached out to the wards. An instant later, the visitors’ entrance stopped working, and the door to the courtroom latched with an audible click.

“What’s going on?” Someone demanded loudly.

Before Amelia could answer, Kingsley lynx Patronus flew through the doors.

“There’s been an attack within the Ministry. We’re locking everything down until the culprit has been caught,” came Kingsley’s soothing baritone.

“How long is this going to take?” An older with asked impatiently. “I have a meeting to get to.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know,” Amelia said. “Perhaps we should continue with the meeting. If we don’t have an answer by then, I’ll check with my Aurors.”

“Minister?” Dumbledore asked.

Opening his eyes, Harry caught Evangeline watching him intently.

“Let’s continue the meeting,” he replied.

Watching him for a moment, Dumbledore nodded and continued as he normally would. Harry had to fight the urge to bounce his leg nervously as he waited. Everything had to go right, or the whole plan could be ruined. If one Death Eater managed to get a message out, dozens of Aurors could be slaughtered.

Just as the meeting was coming to an end, the door to the courtroom opened. All talking stopped as Kingsley strode in with nearly two dozen Aurors behind him. As the Aurors spread out around the room, he walked up to Harry and bent down to his ear.

“We got them,” Kingsley whispered.

Letting out a breath, Harry nodded while he walked over to Amelia.

“Thank you, Kingsley,” she said, climbing to her feet.

Anxious to move, Harry did the same, even though he didn’t need to.

“If I can have everyone’s attention,” she said, though it wasn’t really necessary. “Due to the evidence given to us by Minister Potter, as well as corroborating evidence provided by Walden McNair while under the influence of Veritasserum, the Ministry has issued arrest warrants for every Death Eater present at You-Know-Who’s rebirth. Thadeus Nott, Richard Rosier, and George Selwyn, you are hereby under arrest for aiding and abetting the Dark Wizard He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Surrender your wands peacefully.”

As the Aurors converged on the three wizards, none of them was foolish enough to go for their wands.

“This is preposterous!”

“You can’t do this!”

“These men are well respected members of the community! You can’t just arrest them!”

“Enough!” Amelia yelled, firing a canon blast from her wand. “I assure you, all three of them will be given the opportunity to prove their innocence - under Veritaserum.”

“You can’t do this!” Selwyn screamed, struggling as the Aurors put him in cuffs.

“But I can,” Harry said, a hard edge to his tone.

“You’ll pay for this, boy,” Selwyn growled. “The Dark Lord will make you all pay!”

“Get him out of here!” Amelia yelled.

“What is going on here, Madam Bones?” Damien Greengrass asked. “I think we all deserve an answer.”

“You do, but not now,” Harry said. “I’ll explain everything tomorrow. For now, settle in. No one leaves the Ministry until we’re finished.”

“And how long will that take?” the same witch from before demanded.



“A few hours, at least. Possibly longer,” Amelia replied.

“What!?”

“You can’t keep us here!”

“Quiet!” Harry shouted. “We can, and we are. I apologize for the inconvenience, but it’s necessary. The Ministry is officially on lockdown. I suggest you get comfortable.”

Leaving his seat, Harry headed for the door. As he passed Evangeline, he motioned for her to follow. Raising an eyebrow, she caught up with him and Amelia as they headed toward the elevator.

“Can I know what this is about now?” she asked excitedly.

“In a moment,” Harry said, nodding to Marcus, who summoned the elevator.

“Minister, are you sure...?” Amelia asked.

“Yes,” Harry said. “I want an honest documentation of everything that happens.”

“And if something goes wrong?” she asked.

“Then everyone will know what not to do the next time something like this happens,” Harry said.

Amelia stared at him for a long moment.

“As you wish, Minister,” she said respectfully.

The elevator opened, and everyone walked inside, Kingsley being the last one in. They rode up to the second floor, where every Auror was waiting for them. Even Hermione, Penny, and Daphne were already there waiting for him. Harry fought not to fidget nervously under all of their stares. Moving over to Connie at the front of the room, where a map of Britain was pinned to the wall, she greeted him with a nod.

“The Ministry is secure,” she told him. “All known Death Eaters have been detained, and the Aurors are awaiting your orders.”

“Thank you,” Harry said.

Looking over at Amelia and Kingsley, they nodded to indicate they were ready. It was only then that he realized Dumbledore had followed them. Despite his differences with the headmaster, Harry felt better knowing he was there.

“Alright, everyone,” Harry said. “I’m sure you’re all wondering what’s happening. For the last week, Amelia, Kingsley, Connie, and I have been preparing a plan to arrest every Death Eater we know of. The only way we could do that without them going into hiding is to arrest all of them in one night.”

A loud murmur ran through the assembled Aurors, and Harry stepped back with a nod to Amelia. Clearing her throat, she stepped forward.

“The senior Aurors have already been briefed,” she began. “When your name is called, come forward to receive your assignment, and do not share the name of your suspect with anyone outside of your team until all arrests have been made. This is a security precaution, and breaching it will see you immediately suspended.”

Harry took a deep breath as Amelia finished giving out instructions, and the senior Aurors started calling out names.

“When you asked me to come to a Wizengmot meeting, I certainly didn’t expect this,” Evangeline said.

“That was kind of the point,” Harry said. “Without the element of surprise, too many of them would’ve run or gone into hiding.”

“So, you need to arrest them all at once,” Evangeline nodded, then smiled and practically purred. “My, how ambitious.”

“Just doing what I need to,” Harry said with a light blush.

Smiling, Evangeline patted his arm gently and then walked over to Daphne. Watching her go, Harry jumped when he felt an arm snake around his waist.

“Sorry,” Penny said.

“It’s alright,” Harry said, wrapping his arm around her. “I’m just nervous.”

“You’ll do fine,” Penny said firmly.

Harry wished he had her confidence. For now, he just took comfort in her presence as the Aurors finished getting their assignments.

“Minister, we’re ready,” Amelia said quietly. “If you want to change your mind, now is the time.”

Harry took a deep breath and looked around at the sea of Aurors he was about to send into danger.

“Can I get all of the Senior Aurors over here,” Harry called, then waited until they were all there before continuing. “Does anyone have a good reason we shouldn’t do this?”

The older Aurors looked at each other, but none of them spoke.

“Right,” Harry said, his adrenaline running.

“It’s our job, lad,” Moody reminded him quietly.

Harry nodded, “Send them.”

With grim, focused expressions, the senior Aurors leading the teams grabbed their Portkeys. The rest of the senior Aurors - mostly the ones Harry had brought back out of retirement – gathered around the map to coordinate.

“Remember your training!” Moody barked. “This needs to be quick and clean. Portkeys on my mark.”

Glancing around at the Aurors one last time, Harry caught Tonks’ eye. He gave her a stiff nod, which she returned with a smile and a wink.

“Three... two... one... Go!” Moody yelled.

In a swirl of color, they all vanished. Harry felt like he might vomit as he turned back to the map and watched Matilda and Connie move pieces around like they were playing a board game.

“Teams one through six are in position,” Connie said as a cascade of voices came from a specially enchanted Wireless in front of her.

“Teams seven and ten are breaching now,” Matilda said.

“Any resistance so far?” Amelia asked.

“Nothing yet,” Connie replied.

“Teams twelve and sixteen are clear. The suspects weren’t home,” Agatha Greene said.

“Same with eight and twelve,” Matilda added. “Seven and nine have four in custody.”

“We knew we might miss some of them,” Amelia said.

Despite her calm tone, Harry couldn’t shake the feeling something was off. Stepping closer, he looked over the map. His eyes were drawn to Moody’s name just as his floating banner turned red, indicating their wards were in place. It wasn’t so much Moody’s name that drew his eye but the house they were at. Malfoy Manor.

“Team ten has a barricaded suspect,” Matilda said, drawing his attention away from the map.

“Heavy fighting at the Nott residence,” Connie said, then paused. “Goyle is in custody. More fighting at the Crabbe and Carrow residences.”

“Send team six to the Crabbes and team twelve to the Carrows,” Amelia said briskly.

“Scrimgeour, take your team, and get over to the Notts.”

Nodding, Scrimgeour grabbed a Portkey and walked over to his team.

"Anything from Moody?" Harry asked.

"They're getting in position now," Connie replied.

"Team seven has two in custody and one injured Auror," Matilda said. "He's being sent to St. Mungo's, but it's nothing severe."

Harry let out a slow breath and wiped his sweaty palms on his trousers. Stepping behind him, Penny rubbed his back soothingly while Hermione bit her lip nervously.

"Team fourteen just reported use of the Killing Curse," Agatha called out urgently. "Peterson is down."

Harry's heart dropped into his stomach like a lead weight.

"Dawlish, go!" Amelia barked.

"Ma'am, Moody says he's got over a dozen Death Eaters at Malfoy Manor," Connie said. "They're holding position just outside."

"Shit," Amelia cursed.

"Tell them to get out," Harry said.

"They know they're there," Connie said, listening to her Wireless closely. "A Death Eater tried to Disapparate and found the wards. Moody's team is hiding by the shed, but they're searching."

"Shaw, you're up!" Amelia barked. "Get them out of there."

“Marcus, Kim, go with them,” Harry said.

“Yes, sir,” Kim said eagerly.

“Minister, perhaps I could be of assistance?” Dumbledore asked.

“Please,” Harry said.

“Do we have any other teams free?” Amelia asked.

“Three is just finishing up,” Connie replied.

“Same with thirteen,” Agatha said.

“Tell them to hurry up,” Amelia said.

“They’ve been spotted,” Connie called out, sounding surprisingly calm. “They’re pinned down behind the shed. Jensen is injured but still fighting.”

Harry looked over anxiously at Shaw’s group just as they vanished. His hand itched to grab one of the Portkeys on the table. He hated standing by when he could be out there, helping.

“What’s going on at Nott’s?” Harry asked.

“They’re clearing the house,” Connie replied after a moment. “Nott is secure.”

“See if you can send Scrimgeour over to help Moody,” he told her. “I don’t want to lose any more Aurors tonight.”

“Yes, sir,” Connie said.

“Shaw is on scene with Moody, and they’re pushing the Death Eaters back,” Connie reported.

“If we get control of the situation, do you still want Moody’s to retreat?” Amelia asked quietly.

Harry took a deep breath as he glanced at the map.

“Tell Moody it’s his call,” Harry said.

Nodding, Amelia walked up to Connie and told her to relay the message.

“Scrimgeour just arrived,” Connie said a moment later. “Moody’s requesting to stay.”

“Very well,” Amelia said.

“Ma’am, another report of the Killing Curse,” Matilda said. “Brooks is down. It was Runcorn. He turned on them as they were securing their suspects.”

“Piece of shit,” Harry growled.

“Did they catch him?” Amelia asked, his hands tightened into fists.

“He’s in custody,” Matilda told him. “They want to know if they should search the residence.”



“No, tell them to get back here,” Amelia said. “We can search it later.”

“Malfoy manor is secure,” Connie announced. “Twenty-two in custody, including Lucius Malfoy.”

Harry nodded grimly, unable to feel any joy despite the success. Gradually, all of the teams began to finish up and return with the Death Eaters they’d arrested.

“Minister,” Scrimgeour called when he returned. “I’d like to take the six teams that are back and go after the rest of the Death Eaters on the list.”

Harry furrowed his brow thoughtfully before shaking his head.

“No,” he said. “There’s a good chance they know what’s happening, and we’ve already lost two Aurors tonight.”

“There’s a good chance they don’t know or don’t think we’re coming,” Scrimgeour argued.

“It’s not worth the risk for a handful of petty criminals,” Harry said, shaking his head.

Scrimgeour scowled and then glanced over Harry’s shoulder.

“Amelia, surely you understand,” he said.

“I agree with Minister Potter,” she told him. “Despite our losses, we’ve dealt You-Know-Who a serious blow tonight. There’s no reason to push our luck.”

“But –”

“No, Scrimgeour,” Harry said firmly. “And that’s final.”

Glaring at him, Scrimgeour spun on his heel and limped away. Sighing, Harry took off his glasses and rubbed his face.

“Good on you, lad,” Matilda said. “Going after a few nobodies isn’t worth risking an ambush.”

“Scrimgeour’s a decent Auror, but he’s far too interested in politics,” Amelia said. “I’m almost certain he’s just trying to make a name for himself before the next election.”

“He’d throw away the lives of his fellow Aurors for a bit of positive press?” Harry asked disgustedly.

“I’m sure he thinks there’s little risk,” Amelia said. “Scrimgeour might be a bastard at times, but he’s not malicious.”

“Just selfish,” Matilda scoffed. “I hope he doesn’t get elected. I’d hate to have to leave so soon. It feels good to be back, making a difference.”

“And tonight, we made a big difference,” Amelia said. “Unfortunately, now I need to go inform two wives that their husbands aren’t coming home. Minister, if you wouldn’t mind lifting the lockdown?”

“Sure,” Harry said, reaching out to the wards. “In fact, I’ll come with you.”

“Are you sure?” Amelia asked, surprised.

“This was my idea, so it’s my responsibility,” Harry said, his throat tightening.

“Very well,” she nodded.

As they started towards the elevator, Marcus and Kim joined them. Kim had a cut on her forehead, and Marcus’ robes were singed around the shoulder.

“You two alright?” Harry asked.

“A little banged up, but we’re fine,” Kim said.

“Why don’t you and Marcus take the rest of the night off?” Harry suggested.

“You have your responsibilities, Minister. We have ours,” Marcus said.

“Besides, I’d rather not have to go visit Tonks when she’s in hospital,” Kim said.

“What happened to Tonks?” Harry asked worriedly.

Surprisingly, Kim smirked.

She stepped in a hole when we were leaving and broke her ankle.

Despite himself, Harry smiled.

As hundreds of owls winged their way across England, carrying a special edition of the Evening Prophet, Harry sat in his office signing paperwork. It had been a long, arduous day, but in all, they'd managed to arrest forty-seven Death Eaters, including six of Voldemort's inner circle.

Perhaps the worst part of his day, however, had been informing two women that they were now widows. Neither of them blamed Harry, but he couldn't help blaming himself. It had been his idea and his decisions that had sent them to their deaths.

Harry was so lost in his thoughts that he gave a start when there was a knock at his door.

"Come in," he said after a moment.

The door opened, and Amelia stepped inside, holding up a bottle of amber liquid.

"Care for a drink?" she asked.

"I could definitely use one," Harry smiled.

Standing from his desk, he motioned Amelia over to the sitting area. He started a fire with a flick of his wand before sitting on the couch while Amelia took the chair across from him. Pouring two glasses, she slid one over to him. Both of them took a large sip, and Harry licked his lips at the unfamiliar, though pleasant, taste.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Congiac," Amelia said.

Nodding, Harry took another sip and leaned back with a sigh.

“So, how are you holding up?” Amelia asked.

“Alright,” he shrugged.

Amelia gave a nod, and they both fell into a companionable silence.

“You know,” she said after a long moment, “during the first war with You-Know-Who, Alastor was my first partner. My first big assignment, we were tasked with raiding a suspected Death Eater safe house in Kent. Of course, we didn’t know that the tip came from a Death Eater working inside the Ministry. Sixteen of us went in, and only four of us made it out.”

Harry didn’t know what to say as she fell silent and took a large sip from her glass.

“I remember how little Crouch seemed to care,” she continued. “There were no plans back up if something went wrong. He never asked for our thoughts on the plan or let us make decisions in the field. His only concern was making headlines before Bagnold left office. Things could’ve gone a lot worse today than they did. You really looked out for our Aurors, and I appreciate that. Far too many Ministers consider them expendable.”

“We still lost too many,” Harry sighed.

“It’s still a dangerous job,” Amelia said. “And Runcorn... I’ve worked with him for fifteen years and never once thought he might be a Death Eater. What I’m trying to say is I’m really impressed with the job you’ve done so far. To be honest, I was just hoping to get some things done when you weren’t looking. I never expected things to go this well.”

“Thanks, I think,” Harry said, smiling as he brought his glass to his lips.

“We actually have a lot in common, you know,” Amelia said. “When Crouch was disgraced, I was given the job because I was expected to fail. Fudge didn’t like me because I was competent, and I didn’t kiss his ass. So, he gave me the job, thinking I’d screw up and he could replace me with

one of his lackeys who was less qualified. It's part of the reason our budget was so low. When he realized I could do the job, and do it well, he kept cutting it to make my job harder. In hindsight, I probably should've complained a bit louder back then, but I was too determined to prove him wrong."

"And that is why I hate politics," Harry said.

"That makes two of us," Amelia smiled.

Just then, there was a knock at the door. Turning, Harry looked over the back of the couch as Penny stuck her head in.

"Hey. Oh! Sorry, I didn't realize you were busy," she said.

"That's alright," Amelia told her. "I was just leaving."

Downing the rest of her drink, she set the glass down on the table and stood. As she walked past Harry, she patted him on the shoulder.

"Keep your chin up," she said. "Without you, this country would be a lot worse off."

"Have a good night," Penny smiled as Amelia passed her.

"You too," Amelia said.

When she closed the door behind her, Penny walked over to the couch and sat next to Harry.

"You okay?" she asked softly.

“Yeah, I’m alright,” Harry smiled.

“It’s not you’re fault, you know,” Penny said.

“I know,” Harry sighed. “It’s just...”

“Is there anything I can do?” Penny asked, taking his hand.

“Could you just sit with me for a bit?” Harry asked shyly.

Smiling, Penny kissed his cheek.

“I’d be happy to,” she said.

Her smile turned playful as she stood up and then sat down on his lap. Chuckling Harry wrapped his arms around her as she leaned against his chest and stared into the fire, his caressing her back.