

## Chapter 17

“So, what are we looking for?” Suzette asked.

“I’m not looking for anything specific,” Harry said, looking around the massive room full of things left behind by a millennia’s worth of students. “I thought we could just look around for anything interesting.”

“Are you sure it’s alright?” Hermione asked, her curiosity warring with her conscience. “I mean, isn’t it like stealing.”

“This stuff has been here for centuries, Hermione,” Harry said. “No one’s going to come looking for any of it.”

“Think of all the books we could find,” Suzette added while taking Hermione’s hand and giving it a squeeze.

Hermione bit her lip with a conflicted look on her face for a long moment before she sighed.

“I suppose you’re right,” she conceded.

Grinning, Harry took her by the hand and led her into the maze that was the Room of Lost Things. As far as the eye could see, there were piles of discarded things, some thirty feet high. Most of it was junk, broken furniture, discarded school supplies, empty bottles, and old clothes, along with much, much more.

Among the junk, there were valuable items, such as rare boom, antique brooms, expensive jewelry, and useful magical artifacts. Looking through a pile of old brooms, most of which were in terrible condition, Harry found a pristine Nimbus Cloud, the very first broom made by the company almost three hundred years ago. Carefully pulling it out of the pile, he gently set it on the floor.

“Up!” he commanded.

The broom obediently jumped up and slapped into his hand. Harry grinned widely. A working Nimbus Cloud in this condition would be worth a small fortune to the right collector, but he was much more interested in the history behind it and how this one broom changed the face of Quidditch.

“Hey, girl,” Harry said. “Come grab a broom. Searching this place will be faster and easier if we fly.”

“Harry, you know I don’t like flying,” Hermione complained while Suzette picked out a working Comet Seven.

“We’ll be moving slowly and staying close to the ground,” Harry told her reassuringly before smirking. “If you’re that worried, you could always ride with me.”

“If I fly with you, we’ll never get anything done,” Hermione huffed as a smile twitched at the corners of her lips. “You spend the whole time feeling me up.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing,” Harry said.

Suzette giggled as Hermione picked out a much more recent Comet 120.

“Good choice,” Harry smiled.

“I guess listening to you and Ron go on about Quidditch for the last three and a half years was good for something,” Hermione admitted.

Mounting their brooms, the three of them flew up about ten feet off the ground and slowly cruised between the piles of junk. They didn't make it far before Hermione spotted a stack of books. She didn't find anything interesting, so they took off again.

Flying around, they never more than fifty feet before one of them saw something they wanted to take a closer look at. Throughout their search, they found a few interesting things. Hermione and Suzette found a number of books, while Harry was happy with a few interesting enchanted objects he found. Hermione was especially excited to find a book that wasn't even in the Hogwarts Library.

"It's been thought to be lost for centuries!" Hermione exclaimed. "Just think of all the other lost books we might be able to find in here!"

Harry smiled at her enthusiasm before they continued searching. Even though they spent hours in the room, they covered only a small portion of it. Looking at the immense size of the room, Harry thought it would take months to look through it all.

"Wait," Hermione frowned as they started to leave. "Won't I just forget about the books tomorrow?"

"Dumbledore taught me a spell to link them to you," Harry said. "The books will stay where you put them but, unfortunately, you still won't remember what you read the day before."

"Then what's the point of reading them?" she asked, scowling at the books in her arms.

"You could write a summary for what you 'ave read and then read that in the morning," Suzette suggested with a shrug.

"I'm sorry, Hermione, but there isn't much we can do until I find a way out of this damn loop," Harry sighed. "none of those books you found have anything to do with time, do they?"

“No,” Hermione said with an apologetic look. “I looked, but I didn’t see any.”

Harry took off his glasses and rubbed the heels of his palms into his tired eyes.

“We still might find some,” Suzette said, kissing him on the cheek. “Didn’t you say Professor Dumbledore knew a spell to detect Time Magic?”

“I think so,” Harry replied, frowning thoughtfully. “I’ll ask him about it.”

Smiling prettily, Suzette linked her arm with his and kissed his cheek again. Harry couldn’t help but smile as he looked over at the stunning blonde.

“So, what are we doing for the ball tonight?” she asked.

“I say we forget the ball and stay here all night, just the three of us,” Harry said with a crooked grin.

“That sounds magnifique,” Suzette smiled.

Together, they turned to look at Hermione. Huffing, she looked down at her books longingly before shaking her head.

“I guess there’s no harm in skipping a ball no one will remember tomorrow,” she said.

Smiling, Suzette practically skipped over to Hermione and kissed her on the lips passionately. Hermione squeaked in surprise and froze for a moment, then leaned into Suzette and kissed her back.

“Ladies,” Harry said after a few seconds, smiling. “Unless you want to do this in here, we should probably leave and change the room.”

Breathless and flushed, they each grabbed one of his hands and dragged him out into the hall.

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After a week of searching, at least to Harry, They’d made a large amount of progress. Some of the things they found were just incredible. They’d found a first edition copy of Hogwarts, A History, which Hermione cradled as if it were a baby, a Pensieve, mountains of jewelry, including a chest full of precious gems, and all sorts of valuable artifacts.

Since Harry was the only one who could remember where they searched and what they found, and there was too much to take with them, Hermione had designed a map of the room that marked the location of anything valuable or interesting. She’d tried to make it similar to the Marauder’s Map, but even with Suzette’s help, it was taking time.

When they came across a chest full of gems, Hermione took out her map, unfolded it, and tapped it with her wand. Above the rather accurate drawing of the pile of junk it was buried in, a small, floating flag appeared labeled ‘chest of gems,’ appeared.

“That really is brilliant, ‘Ermione,” Suzette smiled.

“It’s nothing special,” she said modestly. “It’s just a Topography Charm and a few labels.”

“It’s better than anything ‘Arry or I came up with,” Suzette told her. “You’re making it hard for me to decide which is better. That wonderful mind of yours, or your beautiful derriere.”

“Suzette!” Hermione exclaimed as the French girl groped her bum.

“It is a tough call,” Harry grinned, making a show of looking at Hermione’s rear.

The brunette flushed and shook her head at them. While she watched the memories of their time together every morning through the eyes of Harry and Suzette, it always took time for them to feel real to her. That often left Hermione blushing when they teased her.

“Did you ask Dumbledore about using that charm to link us together like we do with objects?” Hermione asked, blatantly changing the subject.

“Yeah,” Harry sighed while running a hand through his hair. “He told me not to unless I had no other option. It’ll work, but for one, it essentially means we’re married.”

“That doesn’t sound too bad,” Suzette grinned, kissing him on the lips. “I think I could put up with you.”

Harry smiled and gave her a kiss of his own.

“It would also mean that if one of us died, so would the other,” Harry said. “We’d literally be linking our souls.”

“Oh,” Hermione frowned. “I guess I’ll just have to keep leaving myself notes.”

“Sorry,” Harry said, squeezing her hand.

“Ow is your dueling with Professor Flitwick going?” Suzette asked as they went back to searching the room.

“Really good,” Harry smiled. “He says I could probably take on most Aurors now. He’s even started taking me out by the forest to teach me more powerful spells.”

“Really!?” Hermione asked excitedly. “That’s great, Harry. I always knew you were good, but to get that far so soon is really impressive.”

“It’s been nearly four years, Hermione,” Harry said, smiling sadly.

“And in that time, most people would just be finishing Auror training, now being able to take on their instructors,” she told him. “I’m really proud of you.”

Harry smiled and wrapped his arms around her when she hugged him.

“What about Ancient Runes?” she asked.

“I just started the sixth year material,” he said. “I haven’t put as much time into that as I have dueling.”

“That means you’ll be able to take the class with me next year, and you can drop that useless Divinations class,” Hermione said excitedly.

“Yeah, now all I have to do is figure out what’s causing a time loop that shouldn’t be possible and then end it,” Harry sighed.

He immediately wished he hadn’t said anything when Suzette and Hermione frowned at him.

“Sorry,” he muttered.

“It’s alright,” Suzette said, caressing his cheek. “We know you must be frustrated.”

“We’re just worried about you,” Hermione added.

"I'm fine," he said, then continued at their disbelieving looks. "No, really. I mean, sure, it gets frustrating, but I've got you two to keep me sane. I'll be alright."

Looking to change the subject, Harry took out his wand and cast the Detection Charm for temporal magic that Dumbledore had taught him. He'd cast it countless times as they searched the Room of Lost Things, but so far, the only things that glowed blue at all were him and Hermione. Even then, it was incredibly dull.

Hermione gasped, her eyes going wide and a hand covering her mouth as she pointed over his shoulder. Harry and Suzette turned to see waves of blue light pulsating outwards in a huge dome.

"Merde," Suzette murmured.

"We found it," Harry whispered.

Hands trembling with excitement and trepidation, Harry gripped his wand tightly and walked towards the source. Walking around a pile of chairs and a mound of old trunks, he came upon a marble bust with a tarnished silver tiara on its head. Hanging around the neck of the bust was the unmistakable hourglass pendant of a Time Turner.

Cautiously stepping closer, Harry stopped when he felt a familiar magic that sent chills down his spine. It was the same magic he felt from the Diary in his second year, only much more malevolent.

"That's Ravenclaws Diadem," Hermione whispered in awe.

Eyes riveted to the tiara, she made to step past him.

"No!" Harry yelled, wrapping his arm around her waist.



“But, Harry, Think of all the knowledge it could hold,” Hermione said, trying to pulled away from him.

Harry started to pull her back, and she dug her nails sharply into the skin of his arm. Hissing in pain and struggling to hold back the surprisingly strong girl, he looked over at Suzette for help. She, too, was staring at the tiara but, fortunately, wasn't moving towards it.

“Suzette, help!” Harry shouted.

Shaking her head, Suzette looked at him in confusion, then glanced back at the tiara while backing over to him.

“Let me go!” Hermione yelled, clawing at his arm and struggling against him.

“Suzette!” Harry screamed. “Help me! It's Voldemort!”

Tearing her eyes from the tiara and looking frightened, Suzette grabbed Hermione from the other side and helped him drag her away. When they got about twenty feet away and were out of sight of the tiara, Hemione relaxed and blinked confusedly.

“What – what happened?” Hermione asked.

“There is a very strong compulsion on that thing,” Suzette said as Harry finally let go of Hermione.

“That was horrible,” Hermione shivered. “It felt like I had to have the Diadem no matter what.”

“We should go get Dumbledore,” Harry said.

Nodding, Hermione pulled out her map to mark the spot, then paused.

“Why is there blood on my hands?” she asked worriedly.

“Arry, your arm,” Suzette said, pointing.

Hermione gasped when she saw the deep, crescent shaped cuts she’d dug into his skin with her nails. Harry’s forearm was covered in lines of blood that flowed from the cuts. Rushing over to him, Hermione healed him while tears fell from her eyes.

“It wasn’t your fault,” Harry said, brushing away a tear with his thumb.

“I should’ve been stronger,” Hermione murmured.

“Hey,” Harry said softly, caressing her cheek. “It wasn’t your fault any more than what happened to Ginny was hers.”

“Suzette was fine,” she said miserably as she let go of his arm.

Sighing, Harry pulled into a comforting hug.

“I struggled too,” Suzette told her. “It was only my Occlumency that kept me acting the same way you did.”

Kissing Hermione on the forehead, Harry and Suzette wrapped their arms around a still visibly upset Hermione and led her from the room.

Half an hour later, after explaining what they'd found to Dumbledore, they made the trip back to the Room of Lost Things with the headmaster in tow. As they grew closer, Hermione stopped and wrapped her arms around herself protectively.

"I think it might be best if I stay back this time," she said.

"I'll stay with her," Suzette offered.

Harry shook his head, "No. Hermione, you need to face this. You know what to expect this time, and I'll be right next to you the whole time."

Biting her lip, Hermione considered his words for a long moment before nodding.

"How close are we?" Dumbledore asked.

"It's just around the corner," Suzette told him, pointing past the pile of chairs.

Nodding, he cautiously walked forward. Harry glanced back at Hermione, who was clinging to Suzette's hand, and then the three of them followed.

"Interesting," Dumbledore said. "You were right. This is just like the Diary."

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"All in good time," the professor replied, giving a meaningful yet subtle glance at the girls. "For now, we should focus on how it is causing time to repeat, and more importantly, how to make it stop."

"Professor?" Hermione asked. "Didn't you tell Harry a Time Turner couldn't do this?"

“Indeed I did,” Dumbledore said. “However, if you look closely, you’ll see that the hourglass is cracked.”

Harry squinted to look closer and noticed that the bottom of the hourglass was cracked, and a few grains of sand had fallen onto the table the bust rested on.

“I believe that, along with Voldemort’s influence, is what is causing this,” he continued.

“But what is it trying to do?” Hermione asked. “Why repeat time at all?”

“It is attempting to resurrect Lord Voldemort, just as the Diary did,” Dumbledore explained. “The...essence Tom placed in the Diadem is not as sophisticated as what he placed in the Diary. While the Diary took its power through Ms. Weasley, the Diadem doesn’t have the means for someone to pour so much of themselves into it. Instead of using a person, the Diadem is attempting to absorb magic for the room.”

“Shit,” Harry cursed. “We have to stop it!”

“Not to worry,” Dumbledore smiled. “It would take centuries for the Diadem to absorb enough magic to resurrect Lord Voldemort. Which is why it is using the Time Turner. Were it not for your connection to Tom, it may have succeeded. The world would have spent centuries reliving the same day, none the wiser that they were doing so, all while Lord Voldemort slowly grew in power.”

“But what about Voldemort?” Harry asked, unconsciously rubbing his tingling scar. “The one at Riddle manor, I mean. Do you think he remembers everything like I do?”

“It’s a possibility,” Professor Dumbledore said, stroking his beard. “However, I think not. The body Voldemort is currently inhabiting is extremely weak. It is taking all of his power to simply remain as he is. That body you saw is simply a vessel to contain his spirit. He is not truly alive,

nor is he truly dead. At the moment, I don't believe he is strong enough to realize what is happening. Still, it may be best to try and find out."

"Can't we just destroy the tiara?" Harry asked.

"It's a Diadem," Hermione corrected.

"Yeah, that," Harry said.

"It is possible," Dumbledore admitted. "However, it could also throw the entire castle back in time hundreds of years."

"Oh," Harry said, swallowing thickly. "So, what do we do?"

"For now, nothing," Dumbledore replied, turning to face Harry. "I know you are anxious to get back to your normal life. However, we must be cautious. I'll need to do some research before we can proceed. The Diadem will fight to protect itself, and a single mistake could have disastrous consequences."

"Can I help?" Hermione asked.

"Your assistance would be most welcome, Ms. Granger," the headmaster smiled. "I must admit, Time Magic is not something I'm overly familiar with."

"Have a headache potion ready," Harry said. "I've been studying it for four years, and it still doesn't make sense."

"I'll 'elp too," Suzette offered.

“Thank you, Ms. Beaumont,” Dumbledore said.

Reaching into his pocket, Dumbledore pulled out a silver pocket watch and looked at it over the top of his half-moon glasses.

“Unfortunately, I’m needed to prepare for the ball,” he said. “We’ll have to start researching tomorrow morning. Harry, if you could be in my office at eight, there’s a few things we should go over. Ms. Granger, Ms. Beaumont, if you two could come at nine, we can get started. I must ask that you don’t tell anyone else about this for now. Lord Voldemort is a dangerous enemy and one we do not want anyone else running into unprepared.”

Harry and the girls nodded their ascent. Dumbledore looked back over his shoulder at the Diadem one last time.

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Harry, Hermione, and Suzette missed the ball again that night. They spent the night in the Room of Requirement, enjoying each other’s company and taking comfort in one another.

The next morning, Harry made his way to Dumbledore’s office, his thoughts racing. There was a sense of relief that he finally knew what was causing him to be trapped in time, but he couldn’t help but feel worried. Who knew how long it would take to figure out how to destroy the Diadem safely? How much longer would he be stuck like this?

Then his thoughts turned to the girls he enjoyed spending time with. Would they remember him? Would he remember them? What if, by stopping the Diadem, Harry forgot everything he’d done and learned over the last four years? All that knowledge, all those memories, everything he’d learned about his classmates, gone in the blink of an eye.

Harry thought of Suzette, who’d become one of his closest friends, someone he’d come to depend on, and what his life would be like without her. He thought of Hermione and their relationship going back to that of just close friends. Then, his mind turned to the other girls he’d

come to care for. Katie, Susan, Daphne, Fleur, those kinky little Carrow twins, Professor Sinistra, and more.

Then, Harry's thoughts turned to all of the things he'd yet to do. He still hadn't given Parvati and Padma the dates they deserved. He hadn't tried to get Susan to realize how much Megan Jones fancied her. He hadn't found a good date for Ron. Even after four years, there was still so much he'd planned to do that he never got around to doing.

And then there was Voldemort to deal with. Harry knew that Moody was being impersonated by Crouch Junior, where Voldemort and Pettigrew were hiding, and what their plan for him was. If he forgot about all that, would he walk into their trap and end up dead after Voldemort was resurrected.

Before he realized it, his feet had guided him to Dumbledore's office on the second floor.

"Acid Pops," Harry said to the Gargoyle.

When the statue slid to the side with a grinding sound, he slipped past it onto the moving staircase. At the top, he knocked twice before he was told to enter.

"Ah, good morning Harry," Professor Dumbledore greeted him. "To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit this lovely morning?"

Harry sighed, "Check the top right-hand drawer of your desk and read the journal you find in there."

As Dumbledore did as he was asked with a curious look on his face, Harry took out his wand. With a twirl, he wordlessly transfigured the straight-backed, wooden chair across the desk into a comfortable wingback. Taking a seat, Fawkes flew over and landed on the arm with a soft croon. Smiling, Harry stroked his feathers while Dumbledore read through his journal.

It was a good fifteen minutes before he finally set it down.

“I see,” Dumbledore said, taking off his glasses and cleaning them on his robes. “I had hoped to put this off longer, but it seems I have, once again, failed to protect you. My journal tells me that you’ve learned Occlumency?”

“Yeah,” Harry said, tilting his head curiously. “Suzette taught me Legilimency and Occlumency.”

“Good,” Dumbledore nodded. “With your permission, I’d like to test how far along you’ve come.”

Harry shrugged, then nodded. Picking his wand up off the desk, Professor Dumbledore looked him in the eye and pointed it in his general direction. He felt the professor enter his mind and did his best to push him out. After several moments of not being able to find a way into his mind, there was a sudden spike of pain as he forced his way in. Harry tried to force him out, but Dumbledore was relentless in his search.

When he realized the headmaster was looking for his memory of their conversation in the Hospital Wing at the end of first year, he started shifting him to other, less important memories. That worked for a while, but eventually, Dumbledore forced his way back to the memory he wanted. As Harry watched it start to play out, he tried something he had very little practice with. He started altering the memory as they watched it.

Suddenly, Professor Dumbledore pulled out of his mind, leaving Harry with a throbbing headache.

“Impressive,” Dumbledore said, then pulled a vial full of a red potion out of his desk and set it in front of him. “Drink this. It’s a Headache Potion.”

Harry downed it with a grimace and instantly felt the pain subside.



“Ms. Beaumont has taught you well,” the headmaster continued. “What I’m about to tell you must be kept secret. The fate of the world may very well depend on it. You may tell Ms. Granger and Mr. Weasley if you wish, but no one else can know. I need your word on this.”

“What about Suzette?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore leaned back in his chair thoughtfully.

“You may tell her as well,” he said after a moment. “Now, tell me, have you ever heard of the term Horcrux?”

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Harry spent an hour learning about how Voldemort had split his soul and placed parts of it in containers. Dumbledore was certain both the Diary and the Diadem were Horcruxes. Unfortunately, the headmaster had no idea how many Voldemort had made, though he believed it to be less than a dozen. As if that wasn’t enough, the headmaster then dropped the prophecy on him as well. It was a lot to take in, and Harry struggled to control his chaotic thoughts.

“So, until all of these Horcruxes are destroyed, Voldemort can’t be killed?” Harry asked.

“Oh, no, he can most certainly be killed,” Dumbledore said. “You demonstrated that yourself when you destroyed his body in Godric’s Hollow all those years ago. It’s more accurate to say that he cannot pass on until they are destroyed. It may seem like a small distinction, but it is an important one.”

“So, what do we do now?” Harry asked, feeling overwhelmed.

“We focus on solving the problem at hand,” Dumbledore replied. “I find difficult problems are made easier by looking at them one piece at a time. For now, we focus on destroying the one in the Room of Lost Things without altering time any more than it already had been.”

Pulling out a piece of parchment, Dumbledore wrote a quick note before holding it up. Fawkes launched himself up from the arm of the chair, clutched it in his claws, and then vanished in a burst of flame.

“I believe your friends will be here shortly. Was there anything else you wished to talk about?” he asked.

“How did the Horcrux get the Time Turner?” Harry asked.

“An excellent question, and unfortunately, one I don’t have an answer for,” the headmaster replied. “It’s possible that a House Elf discovered it, and the Diadem compelled them to place it on the bust. Perhaps they simply did it on their own, or perhaps the Diadem had enough magic to summon it to itself after sitting in such a magically powerful room for decades. We may never know.”

Harry nodded and sat back in his chair with a thoughtful frown. As worried as he was, it was almost a relief to finally know the truth.

“You should’ve told me sooner,” Harry said, surprising himself by speaking aloud.

“I wanted to give you a chance at a normal childhood before placing such a burden on your shoulders,” Dumbledore said.

“I don’t think I ever had a normal childhood,” Harry sighed. “Is there anything else you haven’t told me?”

Dumbledore paused, but before he could answer, there was a knock at the door.

“Enter,” Dumbledore called.

Hermione and Suzette entered the office and took seats on either side of Harry. Before anyone could say anything, there was a burst of flame as Fawkes returned, startling the girls. Flapping his wings, the Phoenix set a large stack of books on the desk before swooping around and landing on the back of Harry’s chair. Looking at the magnificent red and gold bird, Hermione and Suzette reached out to stroke his feathers.

“These are the most comprehensive books on time travel that I can get my hands on,” Dumbledore said. “We’ll need to find a way to neutralize the Time Turner before we can destroy the Diadem.”

Reaching into his desk, the headmaster took out three leather bound journals and handed one to each of them.

“I want you to keep notes of anything useful you find in these journals. I’ve already linked them to myself,” Dumbledore said. “We have from now until two to research before I must leave to prepare for the ball.”

Picking up three of the books, he handed them out and then picked up one for himself. Only the occasional scratch of a quill broke the silence in the room. Harry had trouble focusing on the words on the page as his mind kept drifting to other worries.

Seeing his distraction, Suzette reached over and squeezed his hand. Smiling, he squeezed back. The thought of losing the beautiful girl who’d become such a big part of his life filled him with determination. He was going to find a way to stop the Diadem and keep his memories, no matter what it took.