

ALL CHARACTERS PORTRAYED WITHIN THIS STORY ARE 18 YEARS OLD OR ABOVE.

Summary: An ancient law founded long before the time of Merlin awakens after Harry strikes down Voldemort. Now the oaths of all the Death Eaters transfer to him. Bound to his service, the war criminals must now hand over their fealty, wealth, and even their wives and daughters to satisfy the ancient rite.

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Chapter 23:

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"You surprise me 'Arry," Gabrielle giggled, her breath tickling his ear. "Living in a *manoir* with a retinue of *maîtresses*."

From below, Pansy made a noise of protest that was muffled by his cock before pulling off with a wet slurp.

"Who the fuck are you calling a concubine?!" the brunette exclaimed with an affronted glare, a look that was far less effective by the fact that she was dressed in nothing more than a crotchless pair of silk knickers and high heels. One of the many uniforms Narcissa had bought for the girls.

Gabrielle only giggled. "My apologies," she said, reaching down to hook a finger under the black leather of Pansy's collar. "Perhaps 'sex slave' is a better term, *non*?"

Pansy swatted the French witch's hand away and turned towards him. "Why is she here again?" she whined. "Don't we have enough slutty blondes living here already?"

"Place nice," he replied. "Gabby's a guest, Pansy."

"*Oui*, Pansy. Play nice," Gabrielle giggled once more and she leaned her head against his shoulder. "Or do not. I would love to see 'ow your master punishes 'is toys."

Pansy let out an annoyed scoff. "Tch, whatever," she muttered turning her attention back onto his cock. "Bloody French bimbo..." she trailed off, her lips wrapping around his hardened length

once more. Harry hummed in approval, his fingers threading through her brown locks as she swallowed him deeper with every bob of her throat.

Gabrielle hummed as well, her eyes locked onto the scene of Pansy's pouty lips working the length of his cock with careful devotion.

"She is very good, I must say," the Veela noted, her smile turning teasing as she sat up to level him with a pointed look. "You must give her many opportunities to practice."

"Here and there," he replied, using his grip on the back of Pansy's skull to force her to take him even deeper. The girl made a muffled sound of surprise but otherwise did not protest, allowing his cock to slip easily inside her throat as she took him all the way to the base.

"*Merveilleux!*" the blonde cheered, her eyes alight with excitement as she watched Pansy deepthroat him with ease. "Between 'er and Isabella, I do not know 'ow you get anything done, and yet somehow you 'ave six more?!"

"Jealous?" he grinned, finally releasing his grip on Pansy's hair after her frantic taps against his leg for air.

"*Très,*" she replied with a faux pout. "I am 'alf tempted to join. I would make a fantastic *maîtresse, non?*"

In lieu of answering, Harry pulled the French witch forward, his lips meeting hers in a silencing kiss. Gabby moaned into his mouth, her tongue slipping out to meet his as his hands found the curve of her breasts.

Gabrielle had been intrigued when she first found out about the nature of his and Isabella's relationship. Somewhere between the endless slapping of flesh and pleasure filled moans, the young Veela had proposed the idea of staying with him at Grimmauld Place for a week so she could see it for herself. Isabella had been less than pleased of course, but had ceased her whining after he threatened to cut her allowance by half and make her Gabby's personal slave for the entirety of the blonde's stay.

The other girls had a mix of reactions.

Luna, of course, was nothing but happy by Gabrielle's presence. Apparently the two girls had bonded a few years prior at Bill and Fleur's wedding and thus got along swimmingly. Narcissa was less enthused, but after a single conversation (and personal demonstration of Gabrielle's oral skills later that night) the older blonde had been happy enough to let her stay. Daphne had a similar mindset, albeit one that required far less convincing after Gabrielle spent nearly ten minutes gushing about how pretty she thought the eldest Greengrass was.

The others, Bellatrix, Hestia, and Flora, showed no real care either way for Gabrielle's presence. Bellatrix because she was far too busy with her work to even notice yet another blonde at the dinner table. The twins cared even less, with Hestia stating that it was his house and that he could invite whoever he wished.

Which left Astoria and Pansy. The latter of which had made her dislike for the French witch known while the former—

"Y—You called my lord?" Astoria all but squeaked from the doorway. The younger Greengrass fidgeted under the combination of his and Gabrielle's gazes, her cheeks growing red while she wrung her hands anxiously.

Astoria, it seemed, had a bit of a thing for pretty French girls. By the way, Gabrielle's eyes darkened the moment the petite brunette stepped into the room, Astoria's desires were far from unfounded.

Harry smirked. Giving Pansy a small tap, the kneeling witch obeyed his silent command and pulled off his cock with a strangled gasp.

"Come her 'Stori," he ordered.

Astoria obeyed at once, stepping forward despite the way her blush deepened with every step that brought her closer to Gabby.

"*Oh là là*, is she for *moi*, 'Arry?" Gabrielle whispered.

"She has to earn it first," he replied, placing a lingering kiss against the Veela's lips. "How she does so, is up to you."

Gabrielle hummed, giving Astoria a once over with a thoughtful look.

“She is such a *petite* thing. I would love to see ‘ow she handles such a beastly *coq*.”

Astoria made a sound of surprise that only made Harry’s smirk widen.

“And Pansy?” he asked.

This time, it was Gabrielle’s turn to smirk, her lips twisting into a predatory grin.

“I can think of a use or two for ‘er...” the blonde purred, her legs spreading open as she reached down to tease her glistening folds with her fingers.

Pansy groaned tiredly, but obeyed, crawling between Gabrielle’s legs while the blonde watched with rapt attention as Astoria slowly removed her uniform. Her’s being nothing more than a black bikini with a pair of red stockings (another of Narcissa’s) it didn’t take long for the petite witch to strip and climb onto the couch with him.

Astoria bit her lip as she straddled him, her red flush contrasting against her pale white skin. She reached down, lining him up with her entrance with practised ease of a girl who’s ridden him countless times before. Only this time, she was doing so not only for his enjoyment, but the enjoyment of a very horny Veela as well.

The moment he felt his cock prod against her entrance, Harry struck, taking hold of the brunette’s hips and slamming her down onto his cock, impaling her all the way down to the hilt.

“F–Fuck!” Astoria gasped, her back arching from the combination of surprise and pleasure.

“*Oui*,” Gabby moaned, her legs spread wide with Pansy’s face buried deep between her creamy thighs. “Fuck indeed my *petite pute*.”

Astoria whimpered at Gabby’s words, her hips already moving on instinct atop of him. Her walls accommodated his cock, stretching around him like the perfect sleeve for his length. Within only a few moments Astoria’s quiet gasps were growing louder, as too were her hips moving faster as she wrapped her arms around his neck with a strangled moan.

“Yessss!” Gabrielle hissed, her nails digging into the back of Pansy’s skull as she rocked her hips against the brunette’s face. Her pussy was drenched in a mixture of her arousal and

Pansy's saliva, a similar sheen no doubt also covering the other girl's face. "Ride him faster, *petite pute*. I want to taste your essence on his cock."

Astoria's moans grew louder at the Veela's words. She obeyed, moving her hips at blazing speeds that made even Harry curse aloud in surprised pleasure.

Whether it was a need to ground herself, or a pure lustfuelled desire, Astoria's lips found his only a moment later, a scream of ecstasy spilling from her mouth into his as she went statue still atop him. A warm gush of her juices splashed against his groin, her climax arriving with little warning.

"*Oui, putain*," Gabrielle exclaimed. Without warning, the blonde pushed Pansy away, leaving the brunette tumbling back with a surprised gasp. The French witch was on her feet instantly, pushing Astoria forward until the petite girl was forced off his cock.

Harry barely had time to prepare himself before Gabby's expert tongue was upon him, licking him from base to tip as she cleaned his cock of Astoria's juices. Satisfied she had lapped up every drop, Gabrielle's turned her attention upwards, where the younger Greengrass's pussy still sat poised and dripping wet atop his lap.

Astoria gasped as Gabrielle's tongue found its way to her folds, the brunette burying her face into the crook of his neck as her pussy was devoured by the expert tongue of a Veela.

"You are *délicieux*," she purred, dragging her tongue all the way from Astoria's clit to her arsehole.

Astoria whimpered against his neck and pulled back, her pupils blown with arousal as she craned her neck back to look at Gabby.

"C—Can I taste you n—now?"

Gabby smirked, her perfect features sharp and predatory as she stood.

"Of course, you 'ave earned it after all."

Astoria stood, but before she could make her way to Gabrielle, Harry reached out and grabbed the blonde by the arm, pulling her down onto his lap with her back against his chest.

“She can taste you all she wants,” he growled into her ear. “After I’m done with you.”

Gabrielle shivered against his chest and nodded, leaning back as he lifted her by the hips till her dripping entrance brushed against the tip of his cock. He took her slower than Astoria, pulling her down onto his cock at a measured pace, not out of concern, but out of a desire to memorize every inch of the blonde’s velvety walls as he stretched her open. The second he bottomed out however, was also the second he finally lost his patience.

With one hand on her waist and the other grabbing hold of the blonde’s plush left breast, Harry set his feet on the ground and thrust upwards, slamming into her cunt with a loud *SMACK!*

“*MERDE!*” Gabrielle screamed, her hands flying up to tangle in his hair as he began to set a destructive pace. Her walls clamping down around him with every inch he plunged into her. She was tight, nearly as tight as Luna and Pansy, the latter now watching on her knees next to Astoria in front of them both. Both girls were transfixed at the sight of him brutally fucking the young blonde, their eyes glazed over in a thick sheen of lust and jaws slackened. A side effect of Gabby’s allure maybe?

Whatever the case, it gave Harry an idea.

Halting his thrusts, he held Gabrielle aloft until only the first few inches of his cock remained inside her.

“Your mouths,” he ordered. “Put them to use.”

They moved at once, Pansy’s tongue exploring every inch of his cock while Astoria’s mouth descended upon Gabby’s clit. The blonde let out a coo of satisfaction, her chest heaving with each breath as her pussy was devoured by the eager concubine.

“I take it back,” she moaned, craning her neck until her lips were a hairsbreadth away from his.

“I am *very much* willing to join. I could get used to this, I think.”

Harry let out a sound that was half laugh half moan as Gabby began to rock her hips atop him once more. With his cock disappearing back inside the blonde’s folds, Pansy moved lower, sucking on his bloated sack while Astoria moved up to suck on the blonde’s breasts.

“You’d be practically a slave like them y’know,” he replied, his grip tightening on her hips and breath becoming ragged as his end approached.

“*Oui*, but would I not make a fantastic one?” Gabby replied.

Harry’s only response was a deep rumbling groan as he finally achieved his release. His crashed his lips against hers, his balls plusing inside of Pansy’s mouth as he unloaded rope after rope of sticky white cum deep inside the slutty Veela’s cunt.

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Diedrich Voss knew what kind of man he was.

Power hungry, ruthless, a born killer. All these things were true about him and more. He had no qualms over spilling blood, nor did he particularly care whose blood it was, whether they be man, woman or child. Did this make him a monster? Probably. Did he give a damn? Of course not.

He knew what he was.

Diedrich Voss *was* a monster.

But more than that...Diedrich Voss was *loyal*.

Most would have thought such a thing impossible. Men like him, who carved their names into the world with knives and curses, tended to bow only to gold, flesh, or opportunity. Power was always the truest lure, a siren call that drew in every wizard who ever dared tread the darker paths. Raczidian, Herpo the Foul, Emeric the Evil, Barnabas Deverill. Even Voldemort. All had slaughtered for the promise of greater strength.

Diedrich was no different.

He craved power. He respected it.

And his master possessed it in frightening abundance.

Nurmengard had diminished him, yes, and regaining even a fraction of his former might had taken long, grueling years. But Diedrich was no fool. He had felt that power growing—coiling, thickening—readying itself. Soon Lord Grindelwald would be strong enough to wrench the

wizarding world into his grasp once more. Diedrich and his brothers and sisters in the sacred order had ensured that. No one would stand against his master now. The only man who ever had lay buried beneath white marble.

Only one obstacle remained.

Harry Potter.

He was a formidable wizard. Diedrich knew that the moment he first laid eyes on him. Years of killing and duelling had sharpened his instincts; he could smell danger long before it bared its teeth. Even without the legacy of defeating Voldemort, Potter carried himself with the unmistakable steadiness of a man who had died once in all but body and clawed his way back. The only question was how great a threat he truly posed.

That was why Diedrich was here. His blood thrummed with anticipation at the thought of crossing wands with the so-called Savior. Part of him hoped Potter lived up to the legend. It had been far too long since he hunted prey capable proving a challenge. Hopefully, Potter would not disappoint.

A sudden tightening around his heart tore him from his thoughts. Pain ripped through his chest, dropping him to one knee. He clutched at the spot, breath stuttering.

His master was calling.

With shaking fingers he fumbled for his wand. The agony made speech almost impossible, but he forced out the incantation through clenched teeth. Shadows billowed before him. The pain evaporated. A looming spectre, humanoid, featureless, woven from smoke and authority, took shape.

Even half-real, Grindelwald's presence commanded reverence.

"Diedrich..." the shadow murmured, voice like a blade dragged across stone.

"Master." Diedrich bowed deeply, not out of fear but devotion.

"Rise. I have no use for your grovelling," the spectre hissed.

He obeyed instantly. Hesitation never brought anything but punishment.

"My spies tell me you cornered Potter at his own ball," the spectre said. "I trust this means your task is complete?"

"Yes, master," Diedrich replied, keeping his tone even though triumph threatened to leak through. "Potter took the bait exactly as you predicted. Our duel will commence in three weeks time."

"Excellent." The air pulsed with cold satisfaction. "I am eager to see what Albus's precious weapon is capable of. Remember this, Diedrich, the boy must live... for now."

"Of course, master." He would not kill Potter. Not yet. But that hardly meant the boy would walk away whole.

"And what of Theodore?" Grindelwald asked, amusement curling through his words. "I trust you have been... civil to our esteemed ally."

"I have refrained from killing the insipid rat if that is what you mean, master. Though the boy tests my patience daily."

A ghostly chuckle rippled the shadows. *"Your restraint impresses me, old friend. Do not worry. Once we have extracted what we need from the imbecile lordling, you may dispose of him as you please."*

Diedrich hesitated, then asked with a spark of hope, "His mother as well?"

The Dowager Lady Nott. A shrill harpy whose shameless attempts at seduction disgusted him more than her son's cowardice. Diedrich still shuddered whenever he recalled her hungry, appraising gaze.

Grindelwald waved a smoky hand. *"Do with her as you wish. I care nothing for her fate."*

The spectre paused, looking somewhere far beyond Diedrich before turning back with cold finality.

"I have other matters to attend to. Go now. And do not disappoint me."

The smoke dissolved into nothingness.

Silence settled. Diedrich remained still for several breaths, waiting for his heart to stop hammering. His chest throbbed where his master's call had gripped him, but pain was nothing he hadn't borne before.

He rose.

He had work to do.

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"Reducto!"

Harry barely gave the crackling red spell a passing glance. He flicked his wrist, almost bored, and the curse veered off course like it had hit a brick wall, slamming into the training room shield with a near-deafening *CLANG* that rattled the floor.

Tonks was already moving, her boots skidding across the stone as she sent a vicious yellow curse screaming toward him. He jumped back just as it struck the ground at his heels with a splash, and the floor dissolved into bubbling black sludge, eating outward in a widening ring. The stench hit a second later, sharp and chemical.

Harry didn't slow. He vanished from its edge with a twist of his foot, reappearing a few yards to the left. Tonks' next curse was already airborne, a rapid-fire stunner tinged red with panic.

Smirking to himself, he reached out with his off-hand and *caught it*. He quickly closed his fist around it, snuffing the spell out like a candle flame. Sparks fizzled between his fingers as he tossed the dying light away.

"Oh, sod off!" Tonks snapped, firing three more spells in a fan-shaped spread that lit the room in red, yellow, and green.

Harry dove low, rolled, then sprang up, dashing forward, wand carving sharp sigils into the air, each stroke glowing briefly before bursting into raw force. Tonks fired off another, but she misjudged her timing. With speed that surprised even him, Harry slid beneath her incoming curse, sparks brushing his hair as it passed overhead.

Then he leapt.

A full, twisting vault that took him clear over another curse—this one a streak of violet that cracked like lightning. Before he even landed, he slammed his wand down. The stone floor answered him with a groan. A fracture split outward, then exploded as jagged pillars of ice roared upward, spearing toward Tonks like an avalanche of crystal spears.

Her eyes went comically wide.

“Ah bugger me—”

The ice hit her with a thundering impact, lifting her clean off her feet and flinging her into the padded wall. Her wand clattered somewhere across the room.

Silence—

then a low groan.

Harry winced, already dispelling the ice with a sweep of his wand. “Alright there, Tonks?”

The melting frost revealed his pink-haired friend slumped sideways on the floor like someone had dropped a puppet. She blinked up at him, eyes slightly unfocused.

“Fucking *peachy*,” she rasped. “Blimey, I think you gave me a concussion, Wonder Boy.”

Harry grimaced as he helped the metamorph stand. Her legs wobbled ever so slightly, indicating that she did indeed most likely have a concussion. Throwing her arm over his shoulder, he helped the dazed auror over to a nearby bench, silently summoning a potion they kept on hand for injuries like this.

Tonks took the potion greedily, downing the entire bottle like whisky without so much of a grimace at the putrid taste. Her expression slackened as the potion kicked in; her pupils shrank back to normal... though one was suddenly lime green and the other bright orange.

Tonks blinked. “Bugger. That’s not right.”

Her face scrunched in concentration. One eye turned blue. The other flickered pink, then purple. Finally, both settled into their usual vibrant pink.

“That’s better. Head trauma makes it hard to keep my features normal,” she muttered.

Harry gave a snort as he retrieved them both a bottle of water. "This has happened before, then?"

"My eyes changing is pretty tame. It's usually worse," Tonks replied, accepting the offered water. She quickly uncapped it, taking a generous sip with a muffled sigh of relief before continuing, gesturing vaguely at her head. "One of the rookies set off a detonation ward on a raid a couple of years back. A piece of debris smacked me right in the skull while I was shielding the dumb shite. By the time I staggered to a healer, my hair had transformed into bloody porcupine quills, my left arm had shrunk six inches in length, and my rack was three times bigger."

Tonks snorted, waving at her already notable chest. "I was lucky my robes didn't pop open and give everyone a show."

Harry chuckled, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Thanks again for doing this. I know you probably had better things to do than help me knock the rust off my duelling skills."

Tonks waved him off with a snort. "Please. If anything, you're doing me a favour. I've been dying for an excuse to get out of the house. Mum's brilliant with Teddy, truly, but she hovers like it's her full-time profession."

Harry winced sympathetically. "That bad?"

"Merlin, yes," Tonks groaned, throwing her head back dramatically. "Don't get me wrong, I'm thankful for her help, but it feels like she is *a/ways* checking up on me. I can barely take a shower without her knocking every thirty seconds to 'make sure I haven't drowned.' Who the hell drowns in a shower, Harry?"

"Very poor swimmers?"

She shot him a flat look.

"Funny," She snarked, pushing herself fully to her feet, pacing now, hands flying in expressive arcs. "That's not even the worst of it! Do you know how long it's been since I've had a good shag? Because I bloody don't!"

Harry nearly choked on his water.

"I'm not ready to date again, sure," Tonks went on, ignoring him completely. "But I haven't sworn off sex! Only thanks to Mum, I might as well be a sodding nun. A *very, very* sexually frustrated nun." The meatamorph groaned and pinched the bridge of her nose. "The last time I *did* try to go out—to meet up with this absolutely gorgeous witch from Brixton, proper goddess-tier, Harry—I was halfway out the door, hair done, boots on, looking incredible if I do say so myself, when Mum stops me out of nowhere like a suspect in interrogation. Suddenly, it's all '*Where are you going? Who is she? How old is she? What does she do? Should you really be wearing that skirt, Nymphadora?*'"

Harry winced. "Yikes."

"Harry, she kept me there for thirty minutes. *Thirty*. I could have bloody driven through London traffic and still made it to my date in that time, yet somehow Mum still managed to delay me long enough that my date thought I'd stood her up."

Tonks flopped back onto the bench with a sigh.

"It was worse than when she caught me and Charlie Weasley snogging in the park when I was sixteen. Only difference is that I'm twenty-nine now and legally allowed to leave the fucking house whenever I want!"

She paused, breathing heavily. A beat passed between them as her tirade slowly settled down.

"...Charlie Weasley? Really?"

Tonks snorted and rapped her knuckles against his shoulder.

"Sod off. I was sixteen, and he'd just gotten that dragon-fang earring. It was hot," she insisted.

"And you're hardly one to talk. Aren't you shagging not one, but two of my evil, bitchy aunts these days, Wonder Boy?"

Harry raised his hands up in surrender. "Fair. Though Narcissa isn't really as bad as you think she is. She's come a long way. Bellatrix, too."

Tonks let out a bark of disbelief. "I'll believe that when I see it."

Then, with the slow, wicked grin of someone about to cause trouble, she leaned back and added, “Still, if what you’re saying is true, maybe I should just send my mum your way as well. Then you’d have the full Black Sister set, and Mum would be too blissfully distracted to spend every waking moment pestering me.”

Harry felt his eyes widen in disbelief. “Tonks!”

“What?” the metamorph laughed. “I’m just saying, if you can fuck the crazy out of *Bellatrix Lestrange* of all people, then you could easily handle my mother!” she defended. “Plus, mum’s still a knockout. She made all of *this* after all,” Tonks said, gesturing towards herself.

Harry was forced to look where the metamorph was pointing. The tight training pants and sports bra she wore did little to hide any of the auror’s natural curves. There was no arguing that the pink-haired witch wasn’t *stacked*, from her large grapefruit-sized breasts down to the wide berth of her hips that gave way to an enticingly round bum. Add that to his intimate knowledge of both Narcissa and Bellatrix’s bodies, and well...it wasn’t hard to believe the metamorph’s words when it came to her mother’s figure.

Shaking his head to clear out the less-than-innocent thoughts about his friend’s mother, he gave the pink-haired witch a withering look.

“I’m not going to seduce your mother just so you can sneak out to get laid, Tonks.”

Tonks pouted and slumped back into her seat. “Boo! You’re no fun!” Finally, the metamorph sighed and sat up to stretch her back. “Fine, it was mostly a joke anyway...mostly.”

Waving her hand dismissively, she once more retrieved her water and took a sip.

“Anyway—my non-existent sex life aside— I looked into this Voss bloke like you asked.”

Harry’s demeanour sobered instantly. “And?”

Tonks set her water down and sighed. “He’s clean. A bit too clean, honestly. No real friends, no meaningful alliances, no family except a distant cousin rotting in Nurmengard for trafficking illegal magical creatures. No scandals except a few questionable tactics in competitive duelling.

No hobbies. No political ties. Hell, the guy doesn't so much as have a fucking hobby aside from duelling and throwing the occasional party."

"He did say our parties were tame compared to the ones back in Germany," Harry muttered.

Tonks let out a huff of a laugh. "I believe it. By all accounts, his parties are nothing more than an excuse for people to drink and fuck themselves into a stupor. No scheming politics like the balls and soirees hosted here."

"He said as much," he replied with a shake of his head.

Sighing, he stood. It was his turn to pace now as he mulled over everything Tonks had told him, along with what he knew of Voss himself.

"What's his angle then? Why has he thrown his lot in with Nott of all people? By all accounts, he shouldn't give a damn about me or politics. What does he gain from it all?"

Tonks shrugged. "Maybe he just wants to fight you. Not many people can say they've gone toe-to-toe with the Great and Mighty Harry Potter," she said, waving her hands dramatically.

"Maybe, but then again, when is my life ever that simple Tonks?"

"Oh, never," she snorted, before settling her gaze into something more serious. "Look, you want my opinion? I think Voss *is* up to something. I just don't think it's Nott's plan that he's following."

"You think he's working for someone else?" he asked, crossing his arms with a thoughtful expression.

"Maybe. I don't know for sure, but I *do* know Voss's type. Power is something he respects. He's not the type of guy who would take orders from a cowardly little rat like Nott just for fun. There has to be another motive at play, one we're not seeing."

Harry breathed out tiredly through his nose and rubbed his eyes. "That makes sense. I don't *like* it, but it does make sense."

Tonks smiled sympathetically. "When is the duel anyway?"

"Not for another month. I wanted time to try and figure out his angle and train. Confident as I am, even I know going in rusty wouldn't be a good idea."

“Probably not,” Tonks laughed. With a groan, the metamorph stood back up and stretched her arms. “Guess that means we should probably get back to it then, huh? Gotta make sure you don’t go and get yourself killed before you have a chance to shag my mum.”

“Tonks!”

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Harry stepped out of the fireplace with a weary sigh. For nearly six hours, he and Tonks trained, the metamorph proving to have more tricks up her sleeve than even he anticipated. By the end, they were both slumped on the floor, breathing ragged, and too tired to so much as cast a tempus charm between them.

They agreed to meet again in a few days when Tonks was free again, her schedule as an auror taking precedence, of course.

Kicking off his shoes, Harry didn’t even bother announcing he was home. His entire being was focused on one single goal: a long, scalding shower followed by some much-needed sleep.

He was so drained that he didn’t even register how quiet it was in the manor. No snide remarks from Isabella from down the hall, none of Pansy’s upbeat pop music or Astoria’s light humming as they cleaned. Luna wasn’t even in her normal spot, sitting upside down on the recliner, reading a copy of the Quibbler. It was, by and large, a ghost town.

Still, Harry noticed none of this, even as he ascended the stairs and tugged off his shirt. He didn’t notice that his bedroom door was slightly ajar. He didn’t notice the warm light spilling from beneath the bathroom door. And he certainly didn’t notice the hushed voices drifting from inside. No, he noticed none of this right up to the moment when he opened the bathroom door.

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