

Chapter 43

Students moved out of the way as Harry marched purposefully down the hall towards Dumbledore's office. His robes were disheveled, his face was smudged with soot, the left lens of his glasses was severely cracked, and his hair was singed and smoking. The gargoyle guarding the headmaster's office leaped aside as he approached, and he quickly climbed the spiral staircase, even as it revolved upwards. Dumbledore looked up from a stack of paperwork and frowned as he took the seat across from him.

"Harry, what happened?" he asked with concern.

"I tried to remove the soul fragment from the Horcrux," Harry said.

Fawkes took off from his perch, landed softly on his shoulder, and used his wing to put out a smoldering patch of hair.

"It was a poor decision."

"I see," Dumbledore said, his frown deepening.

"It's way more powerful and sentient than I expected," Harry sighed. "The bloody thing summoned a potions cabinet from across the room. I didn't expect it to explode."

"Ah," Dumbledore nodded. "Well, some potions ingredients do grow more potent—"

"The longer they sit," Harry finished with a grimace. "Yeah, I remembered that bit when I was picking myself up off the floor."

Sighing, he ran a hand through his hair.

“Did you know they could do that? The Horcruxes I dealt with in my time played mind games. They’d whisper in your ear and manipulate your emotions, but they never outright attacked someone.”

“I’m afraid I know as much as you,” Dumbledore shrugged. “Perhaps even less. I’ve never handled one of those abominations.”

Harry reached into his pocket, pulled out the Diadem, and tossed it onto the desk.

“Well, have at it.”

Dumbledore lifted it with the tips of his fingers. Holding it at eye level, he examined it closely, his eyes dancing back and forth behind his half-moon glasses.

“Did you learn anything during your experimentations?” he asked.

“Nothing useful,” Harry grumbled.

Leaning forward, he plucked a candy from the bowl on the headmaster’s desk and popped it into his mouth. He was only mildly surprised to find it was a Werther’s Original.

“I think I could use it to summon the larger portion of his soul with the right ritual, but that doesn’t really help us,” he said. “Most likely, it would drag his body along for the ride. It might be useful later, though.”

“And you can’t do the same for the smaller portions?” Dumbledore asked, twisting and turning the Diadem in his hands.

“Maybe. I don’t know,” Harry sighed. “Probably not without summoning the bigger part, too. I was in the middle of trying to figure that out when everything got bright and loud.”

"I'll take a look at it and see if I can glean anything," Dumbledore said, taking his eyes off the Diadem and peering at him over his glasses. "I take it you'd like me to hold onto this?"

"Please," Harry nodded. "Now that it knows I'm looking for a way to destroy it, I'm worried it might try to trick a student or House Elf into moving it."

Nodding, Dumbledore reached down and opened the bottom drawer of his desk. A moment later, he straightened up and set a small but heavy iron chest on the desk. He placed the Diadem carefully inside and closed the lid. A Kaleidoscope of color flashed across the surface, a sure sign that heavy wards were falling into place.

"Perhaps I should assign you an unused classroom for any future experiments," he said, lips twitching under his beard. "I'd prefer to avoid any unnecessary explosions in my office."

Fawkes crooned amusedly while Harry gave the headmaster an unimpressed look and grabbed another Werther's from the bowl.

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Leaving Dumbledore's office, Harry wandered aimlessly through the halls, lost in thought. It was still early in the morning, so there was still plenty of time for breakfast. Thankfully, Lily was used to his habit of waking in the middle of the night with a need to do something. Hopefully, she wouldn't be too upset when she woke to find a note in his place.

Eventually, his wanderings led him to his destination. The Great Hall was filled with the din of excited voices. He passed the new Gryffindor first years sitting at the end of the table and smiled when he heard them discussing the wonders of magic. Spotting his girlfriends further down the table, he made his way over and sat down between Lily and Bellatrix.

"Where were you this morning?" Lily asked curiously.

“Dumbledore’s office,” Harry replied.

Before he could continue, James, Sirius, Remus, and Peter sat down on the bench across from them.

“Hey, Harry, listen,” Sirius said, his expression befitting his name. “We were talking, and we had an idea.”

“He’s not going to help you with your stupid pranks,” Lily warned, her eyes narrowed as she aimed her fork at him threateningly.

Sirius raised his hands placatingly.

“Easy there, Evans,” he said, “no pranks this time. We want more dueling lessons.”

“Dueling lessons?” Harry asked.

“Yeah. You know, like you did this summer. We want you to teach us so we can help fight the Death Eaters.”

“I don’t know if I have time for that,” Harry said.

“Oh, come off it,” Sirius scoffed. “You skipped class more than the four of us combined, and you still graduated at the top. You know more than half of the professors. What else are you going to spend your time doing?”

“Me,” Bellatrix chimed in with a smirk.

“Don’t be so crass,” Narcissa scolded before turning to Harry. “As much as I hate to admit it, since it came from Sirius, but it’s not a bad idea. I think all of us could stand to learn more, especially after this summer.”

Lily and Bellatrix nodded in agreement.

“Harry,” James said, uncharacteristically solemn. “They attacked my home, my parents... they tried to kill us.”

Harry sighed in defeat.

“Alright,” he said.

“Can we come to?” Marlene asked, gesturing to herself and the other Gryffindor girls.

“You can invite anyone you want, so long as I’m not organizing it,” Harry said. “Just tell me when and where.”

“We’ll take care of it,” Lily said.

She looked over at her former roommates, who quickly nodded in agreement.

“We’re not inviting Slytherins,” Sirius said, folding his arms across his chest.

Bellatrix and Narcissa gave him pointed looks.

“Present company excluded,” he added awkwardly.

“We don’t have a choice,” Lily said, folding her arms to match Sirius’s posture with an equally stubborn glare. “All clubs and organizations must be open to all houses. It’s in the rules.”

“Oh, who cares about rules?” Sirius argued. “It’s not like we *have* to tell the teachers what we’re doing.”

“Don’t have to tell us about what, Mr. Black?”

Sirius slowly turned and looked up at Professor McGonagall’s stern face.

“About how we plan to do all of our homework as soon as possible this year, professor,” Sirius replied with a lopsided smile.

Professor McGonagall quirked an eyebrow, and her lips thinned.

“We were talking about starting a new defense club, professor,” Lily said. “Harry’s going to teach us how to duel.”

The professor turned to Harry, who just shrugged helplessly at her questioning look.

“A commendable idea,” she said, her expression softening. “You’ll need a professor to supervise something that dangerous. Might I suggest speaking with Professors Fortescue or Flitwick?”

“I’ll talk to him,” Alice offered with a smile.

“I trust you won’t try to abuse your relationship with your grandfather while he’s a professor at this school,” Professor McGonagall said with a pointed look.

“Of course not, professor,” Alice replied with a smile.

McGonagall nodded sharply and continued on her way to the Head Table.

“There, that’s settled,” Lily said with a satisfied nod.

“I can’t believe you actually want to invite Slytherins,” Sirius said, his lip curling in disgust. “You know most of them are going to join You-Know-Who.”

“Maybe that’s because they feel like they don’t have another choice,” Lily argued.

“Maybe they’re just evil,” Sirius replied heatedly.

“You know,” Remus interjected, “this does give you the chance to hex them without getting in trouble, for once.”

Sirius and James slowly turned to each other with matching grins. Lily folded her arms and glared at Remus, who shrugged as if to say, ‘It worked, didn’t it?’

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Classes were so boring for Harry that he didn’t bother to go to Charms after lunch. Instead, he scoured the library for books on soul magic. There wasn’t much, but he hadn’t expected there to be. Soul magic hadn’t been explored for more than a thousand years. It had been labeled taboo, and for good reason, long before Hogwarts was built.

And for once, the knowledge he’d gained from the Elder Wand was little help. Only a few of the wand’s previous holders had dared to use such a primal and dangerous magic, and none had ever explored it in depth.

For the first time in a long time, Harry felt like he was entirely on his own. It was a familiar and unsettling feeling.

When he returned to the Head's Suite in Gryffindor Tower with the only two books that touched on soul magic in hand, he discovered a letter sitting on his desk. The handwriting caught his attention immediately and brought a smile to his face. It looked like a child had written it. Letters that shouldn't have been capitalized were, some that should have been weren't, a number of the R's were reversed, and it severely lacked punctuation.

But it wasn't from a child. It was a report from his House Elves. Sitting down at his desk, he read. The further along he got, the more his smile slipped into a concerned frown.

Voldemort was still silent, but his Death Eaters were active. None of them had yet to mention any specific attack over the mirrors, but a large number of them were overseas. It didn't seem like any of them suspected the mirrors were being listened to. They openly talked about recruiting witches and wizards from the continent with their families back home. They didn't mention specific numbers, but it was at least a relief to know what they were up to.

Setting the letter down, Harry absently set it alight with his wand as he thought about what to do next. Clearly, Voldemort was looking to replenish his numbers, but when and where he was going to attack remained a mystery. He suspected Hogwarts, but he could easily see Voldemort attempting to take over the Ministry first.

With a sigh, Harry vanished the ash on his desk and rubbed his face tiredly.

Why couldn't the bastard just die easily this time?

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"Do you still plan on sneaking into the Slytherin dorm to visit Narcissa and Bella?" Lily asked as she got ready for bed.

“Yeah, why?” Harry asked.

“You should go tonight,” she said. “They’re both jealous I get to spend so much more time with you this year.”

“Getting tired of me already?” Harry smirked.

Lily scoffed.

“Not likely.”

Grabbing the front of his shirt, she pulled him in for a short, steamy kiss.

“Go,” she said, pushing lightly on his chest when he reached for her. Visit Bella tonight. You know how impatient she gets. You can visit Narcissa later this week.”

“Alright,” Harry said.

With a wave of his hand, he pulled his invisibility cloak out of thin air and wrapped it around his shoulder. Giving Lily one last kiss, he stepped out into the empty common room and then slipped through the portrait.

“Who’s there?” the Fat Lady demanded. “It’s past curfew, get back to bed.”

The portrait closed, and, seeing no one, the Fat Lady folded her arms and nodded to herself.

“That’s what I thought.”

Smirking to himself, Harry ghosted through the halls, quickly descending to the dungeons and making his way to the entrance of the Slytherin common room.

“Mandrake leaves.”

There was a click, and a section of bare wall hinged inwards like a door. Harry walked into the common room and closed the door behind him. He hated the green-tinted lights. It made him feel like he was trapped under the lake. Heading for the girls’ staircase, he descended two flights of spiraling steps and paused outside the door.

He cast a One-Way Viewing Charm and was relieved to see the girls in the dorm already in bed. Slipping inside, he peeked through the curtains of each bed until he found Bellatrix at the very back of the room. She sprawled out on her stomach, arms and legs nearly hanging off the bed, her soft, black curls fanned out on the pillow around her head. Harry smiled and cast a Sleeping Charm on the rest of the room before removing his cloak. Setting it down on the nightstand, he waved his wand.

The blanket covering Bella was split into four strips and bound her arms and legs to each of the posts. Her eyes snapped out, but before she could scream, he covered her mouth with his hand.

“Quiet,” Harry whispered. “I didn’t put up a Silencing Charm. You don’t want your roommates to know I’m here, do you?”

Her violet eyes sparkled with excitement as she shook her head. Removing his hand from her mouth, Harry crawled onto the bed. To his surprise, Bellatrix was completely and utterly naked.

“You sleep starkers?” he asked softly with a smile.

“I got used to it over the summer,” she whispered.

Smiling, Harry stripped out of his clothes and pressed himself against her back. He rapidly hardened against her firm bum and bent down to kiss her neck. With a moan, Bella arched her back as much as her bonds would allow, doing her best to present herself to him.

“Try to keep it down,” Harry whispered.

“What if I don’t care if they hear us?” she asked in as loud a voice as she dared.

“You might not care, but they might,” he smirked. “And if they tell Professor Slughorn that I was here, who knows how long it’ll be until I can sneak in again.”

Bella shivered excitedly and bit her lip as he lined up and sank into her depths. Turning her head, she moaned into the pillow. Harry slipped his arms under her to support his weight, one hand cupping her flattened breast, and rolled his hips. Bella rocked back in time with his thrusts, sending his length as deep as possible.

The sound of their heavy breathing and the slight, rhythmic creaking of the mattress filled the dorm for several minutes. Bella bit the pillow in an attempt to stay silent, but a whimper still escaped.

“Harder,” she begged softly.

“Can’t,” Harry panted against the back of her neck. “It’ll be too loud.”

He captured her nipple between his fingers and twisted it. Bella inhaled sharply and then buried her face in the pillow to let out a strangled moan. Releasing her breast entirely, he slid his hand down to her folds and pressed his fingers directly against her clit. Meanwhile, he wrapped his other hand lightly around her throat. He could feel her gasp as he began moving his fingers rapidly over her sensitive nub.

Bella shook under him. Her hands balled into fists and her teeth tore into her pillow as she struggled to stay quiet. Harry bit the side of her neck to muffle his own groan. Grinding against her plush bum, he felt her tighten around him. She tugged at her bindings fruitlessly, her body tensed, and then trembled violently.

Harry had to stop thrusting as she spasmed around him. With her face buried in the pillow, Bella moaned as quietly as she could until she relaxed and her body went limp.

“Good girl,” he whispered.

Sitting up, he raised his hand and brought it down sharply on her upturned arse. The loud, sharp spank that resulted shattered their carefully maintained quiet. Bella sucked in a sharp breath, held it, and whipped her head to the side. She stared at her roommates’ beds for several seconds, but they never stirred.

“You said you didn’t cast a Silencing Charm,” she said in a normal voice, glaring at him accusingly.

“I didn’t,” Harry smirked. “I used a Sleeping Charm on them. You could scream bloody murder all night long and it wouldn’t wake them.”

Rolling to the side, he grabbed his wand and released Bella from her bonds. She wasted no time in throwing him onto his back, climbing on top, and sheathing him violently in her core.

“Fuck, yes!” she hissed.

Her nails dug sharply into his chest as she rode him as hard and as fast as she could.