

Chapter 1

Harry tossed and turned in his bed the night before his trial. Despite his best efforts to relax or even distract himself, his mind kept asking him, 'what if?'

What if he lost? What if they snapped his wand? What if he was expelled? What if he was kicked out of the Wizarding world, never to return?

Would he be forced to go back to the Dursleys? Would they Obliviate him? Would he even be able to remember his friends?

Rolling over onto his side, Harry punched his pillow three times and then tossed himself back down onto it. He managed to lie still for a second and a half before he rolled back the other way.

Maybe Fleur could help him get into Beauxbatons, he thought.

Huffing, Harry sat up and brought his legs up to rest his forehead on his knees. Suddenly, he heard a loud tap. Head snapping up, he looked over at the window and squinted, trying to see through the dark room. He reached over to the nightstand and, grabbing his glass, pushed them onto his face. As he climbed out of bed, he saw a brown barn owl blinking at him from the plant box on the window sill.

Brow furrowed, Harry wondered who would be sending him a letter as he walked over and pushed open the window. With a grateful bark, the owl flew in and landed on his dresser. From her perch in the corner, Hedwig glared at the intruder and ruffled her feathers before turning her back.

"Don't be rude, Hedwig," Harry said. "He's just the messenger."

Hooting, the barn owl held out its leg. Harry took the thick roll of parchment. Relieved of its burden, the owl took to the air and flew out the window.

“That was odd,” Harry said.

Turning her head to look at him, Hedwig flew over and landed on his shoulder. Smiling, he reached up and scratched her feathers while sitting down on the edge of the bed. With a tug, he pulled the ribbon holding the roll of parchment together loose and set it aside. Unrolling it, his brow furrowed as he read.

What they're doing isn't right. I hope this helps. Good luck.

There was no signature at the bottom or anything on the back when Harry turned it over. Seeing there was another page underneath, he set the top page aside and looked at the second. It took a few seconds of reading before he realized what he held in his hand. Eyes widening, he grinned and stood up.

“We’ve got it, Hedwig,” Harry said excitedly. “I need to go to the library.”

Hooting bemusedly, Hedwig gripped his shoulder tightly with her claws as he rushed out of the room.

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“I can’t go in with you, I’m afraid. I’m not allowed,” Mr. Weasley said apologetically.

Harry nodded, worried his breakfast might come up if he spoke. Mr. Weasley patted him on the back as he walked forward and pushed open the door. The large, dark room felt oppressive as he stepped inside, and the sudden gaze of the entire Wizengamot made him want to turn around and run.

"You're late," Fudge barked, seated behind a raised dais in the center of the semi-circle of benches.

Seeing the man that had called him a liar, maligned him in the press, and now wanted to bring him up on false charges, Harry gritted his teeth angrily and squared his shoulders.

"I didn't know the time had changed," Harry said, his voice echoing in the room.

Every head turned back to the Minister to see his response.

"That's not the Wizengamot's fault," Fudge blustered. "Now that we can begin – finally – disciplinary hearing of twelfth of August into offenses committed by Harry James Potter of Number Four Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey. Chief Interrogators, Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister for Magic, and Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law enforcement."

Harry only half listened as Fudge read out the expected charges. Reaching into his pocket, he rubbed his fingers along the rolled piece of parchment and Glanced at Amelia Bones. He knew she was Susan's aunt, and everyone in the Order spoke highly of her.

"- how do you plead?" Fudge asked, pulling Harry out of his thoughts.

"Not guilty," Harry replied, his tone firm.

"Did you not cast a Patronus Charm in a Muggle residence, knowing full well the illegality of your actions.?" Fudge asked.

"I did," Harry said.

“There we have it!” he exclaimed, thrusting a finger into the air with a triumphant look.
“Witches and Wizards of the Wizengamot-“

“I only did it because of the Dementors!” Harry yelled.

The whole room froze for just a moment before hushed whispers broke out around him.

“Dementors?” Bones asked, a raised hand quieting the room.

“Yes, ma’am,” Harry said. “My cousin and I were coming back from the park when we were attacked by two Dementors.”

“And you drove them off with a Patronus?” she asked.

“Yes, I -”

“A fully corporeal Patronus?” Bones pressed.

“Yes, I -”

“Impressive,” she said with a nod.

“And it is still against the law!” Fudge barked angrily. “The Dementors are under the control of the Ministry, and they were not in Surrey. I say we take a vote -”

“I have proof!” Harry yelled, pulling the roll of parchment out of his pocket and thrusting it into the air.

Around him, the Wizengamot broke into loud whispers once more. Fudge banged his gavel loudly several times.

“Order! Order!” he shouted, sweat beading on his forehead. “What is this nonsense?”

“Yes, please explain,” Bones said, eyeing Fudge out of the corner of her monocle.

“Someone sent this to me last night,” Harry said. “It’s an order from the Ministry to send two Dementors to Little Whinging to Kiss a dangerous criminal.”

“Let me see that,” Bones said at the same time Fudge shouted, “Give that here!”

Staring at Fudge’s quickly paling face, Harry marched up to Bones and handed her the parchment. She read it over quickly, a frown forming on her face, before taking out her wand. Waving it in an intricate pattern, the parchment glowed bright gold.

“It’s authentic,” she announced.

“Let me see,” Fudge barked, his hand held outwards expectantly.

Bones pinned him with a stony glare for several seconds before Fudge swallowed thickly and leaned back in his seat.

“Delores Umbridge,” Bones said loudly. “It says here you were the one to order the Dementors while Fudge was the one to sign off on it. Explain.”

“Hem, hem.” A squat witch cleared her throat with a sickly smile. “It must have slipped my mind.”

“Let me get this straight,” Bones said, eyeing Umbridge intently. “You signed for two Dementors to look for a wanted criminal – who isn’t named in this order, by the way – in a Muggle neighborhood, without requesting Auror support to ensure there were no mishaps? What the hell were you thinking?”

“This criminal has killed over a dozen people, and I wanted to ensure one of our venerable Aurors wasn’t his next victim,” Umbridge said, her sickly sweet smile fading quickly.

“And just who was this unnamed criminal?” Bones asked.

“Sirius Black,” Umbridge replied.

Harry snorted a bit too loudly and looked abashed when everyone turned to him.

“Sirius Black,” Bones said. “Why wasn’t I told of this, and where exactly did you get this information?”

“The information I received was from a highly trusted source and time sensitive. There simply wasn’t time to let you know,” Umbridge said.

“We will be talking about this source of yours later,” Bones told Umbridge firmly. “Why wasn’t I informed after the fact.”

“There was nothing to tell,” Umbridge replied with a simpering laugh. “The Dementors returned empty handed.”

“So, you sent two Dementors into a Muggle neighborhood – without supervision – and conveniently forgot about it hours later when you came storming into my office to tell me Mr. Potter would be subjected to a full criminal trial for the use of the Patronus Charm,” Bones said with a glare.

“How was I to know where Mr. Potter lived,” Umbridge asked innocently.

“You had the notification of underage magic with his address on it in your hand,” Bones barked before turning her glare on the pale and sweaty Minister. “And you, Minister? Did the fact that you sent out two Dementors slip your mind as well?”

“Come now, Amelia,” Fudge said with a nervous smile. “You can’t think this was done intentionally. You know how many papers I have to sign in a day. This is just an unfortunate mishap.”

“A mishap?” Bones asked incredulously. “You call this – this stupidity a mishap? It shouldn’t have happened in the first place! We have policies in place to protect against just this sort of thing.”

“Certainly, you’re not saying we shouldn’t go after escaped murders,” Umbridge asked with an insufferable giggle.

“Not at the cost of innocent lives, Muggle or magical,” Bones said firmly. “It was only luck that Mr. Potter could cast a Patronus and save himself from a fate worse than death!”

The room went silent as the two witches glared at each other while Harry balled his hands into fists. He knew this would happen, but he couldn’t believe they were going to get away with trying to kill him. They’d claim it was just an accident and then go back to calling him a liar and insulting him in the press.

“As heir to the House of Potter and the House of Black, I invoke the Founding Family Protection Agreement, section eight, clause four,” Harry announced loudly.

There was a loud gasp from the benches as the thick tome in front of Percy filled open on its own. As if blown by a gust of wind, the page flipped rapidly for a few seconds until they came to a sudden stop.

“Are you sure you wish to do this, Mr. Potter?” A wrinkled, bald wizard asked. “You are aware of the consequences?”

“Yes, sir,” Harry said.

“Weasley, for those that don’t know the law Mr. Potter has just invoked, could you read it from the book?” Bones asked, eyeing Harry speculatively.

Leaning over the book, Percy traced his finger along the words as he read them out.

“Clause four; Should the Ministry, or Minister, make a concerted effort to end the line of one of the twenty-eight original Founding Families – or fail to take sufficient action should a member of the Ministry attempt to do so - this clause may be invoked. Should a family invoke this clause, the eldest member – or otherwise chosen member – of the offended family shall be given thirty days in the position of the offender to make his or her case.

“To ensure equality, only magic shall judge the parties involved. If, at the end of thirty days, the offender is proven guilty, they shall be stripped of all titles, monies, and properties to be given to the offended. Should the accusations prove false, the invoking family shall be stripped of all titles, monies, and properties and henceforth banished from the magical world.”

“This is preposterous!” Fudge blustered. “You can’t actually expect me to agree to this – this farce!”

“You accepted it when you took the oath of office,” Bones told him. “Your only other option is to resign.”

“I will not!” Fudge blustered.

At those words, the book in front of Percy began to glow bright gold. It rapidly built to a blinding flash that forced Harry and everyone in the room to shield their eyes. When it died,

Harry blinked the spots out of his eyes and found himself wearing the same plum robes as everyone else in the room. Over his right breast sat the Potter crest. Looking up, a snort escaped his lips before he could cover his mouth. Fudge was too busy rubbing his eyes to realize he was now seated in nothing but his boxers. Umbridge took off her outer robe and threw it over his shoulders with a menacing glare at Harry.

"Congratulations, Minister Potter," Bones said with a respectful nod.

Harry nodded back, his mirth fading abruptly. Just as he opened his mouth, the door to the courtroom burst open.

"Witness for the defense!" Dumbledore announced loudly as he strode in, his plum robes covered in sparkling moons.

He was halfway to Harry before he seemed to realize something was off and slowed his walk, his head tilted curiously.

"Right," Harry said, taking a deep breath. "Here's what we're going to do. Madam Bones, I want the DMLE to fully investigate this Dementor incident."

"Of course," Bones said with a nod.

"Second, Fudge and the Prophet have been spreading a lot of lies about me lately, and I think it's well past time to set things straight," Harry said.

"Absolutely not!" Fudge barked, jumping to his feet and nearly knocking over Umbridge. "I've already told the Wizengamot everything they need to know."

"Really?" Harry asked scornfully. "Did you bother to tell them Barty Crouch Jr. is the one that put my name in the Goblet? Did you tell them he impersonated Moody for the entire school year, that you had him in custody, and instead of questioning him, you had him Kissed?"

“What?” Bones hissed as murmurers filled the room, her eyes narrowing as she glared at Fudge.

“Well, I – That’s classified,” he stammered, beads of sweat gathering on his forehead.

“Wait, you mean it’s true?” a witch asked incredulously.

Fudge paled as he realized his mistake, and the murmurers grew louder.

“Well, I’m declassifying it,” Harry growled. “Professor, can I borrow your Pensieve?”

“Certainly,” Dumbledore said.

“Pensieve memories are not allowed as evidence,” Umbridge said, her tone growing shrill.

“Then it’s a good thing no one is on trial,” Bones said, glaring at the squat woman. “Memories cannot be presented at a trial, but they have regularly been used to present evidence to the Wizengamot. Unless, of course, you believe the members of this august body incapable of determining whether a memory is false or not.”

Umbridge glared at Bones furiously as the members of the Wizengamot muttered in agreement. It was only when she threw herself into her chair petulantly that Harry realized she’d been standing in the first place.

He was jerked out of that amusing thought and startled when there was a flash of fire above his head. Fawkes sang as he circled around and dropped Dumbledore’s Pensieve lightly into his hands. Making a sharp turn, he lighted on Harry’s shoulder.

“Did you have to scare the hell out of me?” Harry asked, reaching up to stroke his crest.

Fawkes could only give what could be described as an amused thrill. Preening Harry's messy hair, he took back to the air and vanished in a ball of fire.

"So, how do I put my memory in there?" Harry asked quietly, nodding towards the swirling silver mist.

"Just close your eyes and focus on the memory you want to show them," Dumbledore replied. "And we'll need to talk about why you felt this was necessary later."

Harry rolled his eyes, "Maybe if you hadn't ignored me all Summer, I wouldn't have had to. Anyways, can you take out more than one memory at a time?"

"It is possible, but it requires practice. For now, just focus on one memory at a time," Dumbledore said.

Nodding, Harry closed his eyes and focused on the nightmare he'd been forced to relive in his nightmares nearly every night. He felt the tip of Dumbledore's wand touch his temple for a moment before the feeling disappeared. When he opened his eyes, Harry saw a long silvery strand hanging from the tip. With a light flick, Dumbledore dropped it into the swirling mass of memories.

They repeated the process twice more before turning back to the whispering, curious Wizengamot.

"If everyone is ready?" Dumbledore asked.

Fudge shifted nervously as everyone else murmured in agreement.

"Amos, are you sure you want to stay for this?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry felt the bottom of his stomach drop out as he looked over at Cedric's father.

"I need to know what really happened to my son," he replied stonily.

Dumbledore looked at him intently for a moment before nodding and turning back to the Pensieve. Tapping three runes on the side of the Pensieve, the pool of memories glowed silver and produced a life-size projection of the Triwizard maze just above it.

The courtroom was silent as they watched Harry and Cedric argue over who should take the Cup before agreeing to take it together. In a swirl of color, they were Portketed to the graveyard in Little Haggelton. Harry had to look away when he screamed out and grabbed his scar in the memory, knowing what would happen next.

"Avada Kedavra!"

The room gasped as one.

"That's Pettigrew!" someone shouted.

Harry looked over at Fudge and glared daggers at the man. Not that he noticed; he was too busy staring in horror at the memory playing in front of him. Gathering his courage, Harry looked back and watched as he was tied to the statue and Pettigrew completed the Ritual.

Gasps, screams, and shouts echoed around the room when Voldemort stepped out of the cauldron.

"Quiet!" Bones barked.

The room quieted down while Voldemort talked as he waited for his Death Eaters to return. When they Apparated in minutes later, there were more shouts from the benches. Some were

angry, others scared. Dumbledore had to pause the memory and let loose a canon blast from his wand. After everyone had quieted down, he started the memory back up again.

Harry watched himself closely as he fought against Voldemort and frowned when he saw just how outmatched he was. By the time their wands connected, he was determined to improve. When he finally reached Cedric's body and summoned the Cup, he was surprised when numerous people stood and applauded.

Flushing slightly, Harry ducked his head and looked at Dumbledore. Smiling under his beard, the headmaster tapped the Pensieve and brought up the second memory. With the second memory playing, everyone sat back down to watch. Again, there were exclamations of outrage, this time when a supposed dead man was found to have taught at Hogwarts for a year. There was quite a bit of murmuring when Dumbledore fed him the Veritaserum, and Harry belatedly realized that, perhaps, that might not be entirely legal.

Looking over at Dumbledore, he was relieved to see him wink. Any anger at the Hogwarts headmaster for using truth serum vanished when they learned the truth about Barty and what both he and his father had done.

This time, the memory had barely collapsed before Dumbledore started the third and final memory. Since he already knew what was going to happen, Harry took pleasure in watching Fudge's face lose what little blood it had left as he was forced to watch himself. There was a rumble of muttering when the Wizengamot saw how little thought and investigation had gone into the death of a student and the possible return of a terrifying Dark Lord. That turned into outrage when they saw McGonagall announce Barty had been Kissed before even being questioned by the Ministry.

Fudge pulled Umbridge's plum colored robes tighter around his body and slouched in his chair as the Wizengamot members got to their feet and began bombarding him with furious questions. Bones stood and let out a stream of sparks from her wand. Immediately, most people calmed down and retook their seats, but a few continued to yell.

"Why weren't we informed of this?"

“This is outrageous! I will not stand for members of my houses being slandered by this boy!”

“How did that bastard escape!”

The last shout came from Augusta Longbottom, Neville’s grandmother, who looked ready to throttle Fudge where he sat.

“Enough!” Bones shouted, silencing the room. “Minister, how would you like to handle this situation?”

Harry blinked, his mind taking a moment to realize she was talking to him.

“Oh, right,” he said, grateful Hermione had given him a crash course on how the Wizengamot worked. “The first thing we need to do is elect a Chief Warlock. It’s ridiculous that Fudge took the position himself.”

“I agree,” Bones nodded. “Do we have any nominations?”

Amos Diggory stood immediately.

“I nominate Albus Dumbledore,” he said.

“I nominate Tiberius Ogden,” a middle-aged witch with dark hair said.

As a couple of other names were called out, Harry spotted Fudge whispering furiously to Umbridge. Frowning, he decided to put a stop to whatever they were trying to do. Walking up to the bench, he stopped next to Fudge, who glared up at him.

“I need my seat,” Harry said.

Fudge's face went red as he stood up and jabbed his finger at Harry.

"If you think –"

"Is there a problem, *mister* Fudge?" Bones asked sharply.

Looking around and seeing the vast majority of the room glaring at him, including two Aurors, Fudge dropped his hand and stepped back. With one last glower, he turned on his heel, stumbling slightly down the steps, and walked over to the gallery. As Harry took his seat, Umbridge sniffed imperiously before getting up and moving several seats down.

He was immensely grateful Bones took charge of calling out the nominees and counting the votes. There was a bit of pomp and circumstance to their words that he didn't quite understand yet. In short order, Dumbledore was back in his old position.

"I would like to thank this august body for once again seeing fit to elect me as its leader," he said. "I'm sure that all of you are also as disturbed by what you've seen here today as I am. Fortunately, I'm certain our new Minister will be up to the task of handling this troubling situation. Make no mistake, while Mr. Potter may be young, he has yet to find a challenge he could not meet. And as you may have noticed, Mr. Potter has faced some daunting challenges in his short life."

Harry nodded gratefully as Dumbledore took his seat, and Harry took the podium.

"I'm sure all of you have a lot of questions," he said. "So, I'm going to try and explain everything as best I can before taking questions. So, this all started two years ago..."

For the next half an hour, Harry gave a condensed version of everything that led up to Voldemort's return. During his speech, he watched as the faces staring at him gradually grew more troubled, none more so than Fudge, who looked horribly constipated.

"Any questions?" Harry asked.

"You said that Minister Fudge *knew* Pettigrew was alive?" Amos asked, his face stormy.

"My friend and I told him, but he refused to listen to us," Harry said.

"How much of this were you aware of, Amelia?" Augusta asked.

"Far less than I should have," Bones replied. "I knew nothing about Pettigrew surviving and Black's possible innocence or Barty Crouch Jr's survival and subsequent execution. I was not even notified that Black had been captured until after he escaped from the school. I can assure you, I would not have taken just two Aurors and a Dementor to bring him into custody, nor would I have allowed him to be Kissed before interrogating him."

Augusta nodded before retaking her seat while a bald, wrinkled wizard with a pipe a few seats down stood.

"I have a question for Fudge," he said in a deep, gravelly voice. "Why weren't the Wizengamot or DMLE notified about such important information."

Fudge cleared his throat as he stood, his hands fiddling with his robe nervously.

"You see, Mr. Potter's claims about Black and Pettigrew, at the time, sounded outrageous. Surely, none of you here have ever suspected Black to be innocent," he said.

"We never had a reason to," a witch with short grey hair and a scar over her eye said. "What about Crouch. Why was he Kissed before being questioned?"

"Ah, well, yes. As I'm sure you can understand, he presented a danger to society. He successfully impersonated Alastor Moody for nearly a year without getting caught. After Black's escape, I didn't want to risk another, especially inside of a school." Fudge said nervously.

"And why weren't we told about him?" Augusta demanded.

"Well – ah hem - we didn't know if he had an accomplice--"

"Something you could have easily found out if you had bothered to question him!" Augusta bit back.

"What about my son!?" Amos yelled. "You convinced me his death was an accident! You told me you investigated!"

"What about You-Know-Who?" a witch asked frightenedly. "What are you going to do about him?"

"Now, now. We still don't know that he's really back," Fudge said with a nervous smile. "This could all be some kind of trick. That could've been someone under a Glamour Charm, for all we know."

"I'd rather not take my chances," Ogden said. "And, frankly, I find it disturbing that you would take such a risk."

"Mr. Potter," a tall, square jawed man with short blonde hair said as he stood. "I'd be interested in hearing your plan to combat You-Know-Who and his followers."

"I'll be working with the DMLE to find out exactly what our options are, as well as raising their budget. I wish I had a better answer for you, but I kind of threw myself into the deep end," Harry admitted.

“Do you know when you’ll be able to present us with a plan?” he asked.

“As soon as possible,” Harry said. “I hope to have things moving by the end of the day, if not sooner, and a more detailed plan within a few days.”

“I can assure you, Mr. Greengrass, the DMLE will be making this our highest priority,” Bones said.

Harry blinked at the name and wondered for a moment if he was related to Daphne Greengrass, a Slytherin in his year.

“I look forward to hearing your update,” Greengrass nodded before retaking his seat.

“If there are no other pressing questions, perhaps it would be best to let our new Minister get to work,” Dumbledore said. “Is there any other business? Then meeting adjourned.”

“Fudge, Umbridge, my office, now,” Bones barked.

“Oh, you’re fired, by the way,” Harry told Umbridge.

The squat witch puffed up like a frog, her entire face turning red as she glared at him.

“You have no right to fire me,” she hissed.

“Actually, he does,” Bones said.

“On what grounds!?” Umbridge demanded.

“How about sending two Dementors after me and then trying to have me expelled for defending myself?” Harry asked.

Umbridge fumed silently, her face turning a puce he had only even believed Vernon was capable of.

“Dawlish, Jones, please escort Mr. Fudge and Ms. Umbridge to my office,” Bones said.

“You’ll pay for this, you disgusting little Half-blood,” Umbridge snarled.

When Hestia tried to grab her arm, Umbridge pulled away roughly and thrust her chin in the air as she stalked off.

“Minister, I need your permission to search their office,” Bones told him quietly.

“Anything you need,” Harry said.

“I’ll send you a note as soon as I’m done so we can have a meeting,” Bones said before turning away.

Sighing, Harry began to walk towards the door. He made it only a few steps before Amos stopped him.

“Mr. Potter – Minister – I just wanted to thank you for bringing my son back,” he said emotionally.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t save him,” Harry said.

"It wasn't your fault," Amos said. "Even if Cedric knew what was going to happen, he still would've gone with you."

With teary eyes, Amos patted him on the shoulder before walking away hurriedly.

"It's going to be a long day," Harry sighed.

Chapter 2

"Did you really feel this was necessary?" Dumbledore asked as they rode the elevator up to the Ministers office.

"What else was I supposed to do?" Harry asked frustratedly. "I didn't even know if you'd be here today. They were going to get away with trying to kill me."

Dumbledore sighed, his shoulder sagging as he seemed to age years in front of his eyes.

"I owe you an apology," he admitted. "I wished to spare you from this war for as long as I could."

Harry scoffed, "It's a bit late for that. I've been involved since I was a baby."

Just then, the elevator dinged, and the doors opened.

"Level one, Minister for magic offices," A disembodied female voice announced.

Walking out of the elevator, half a dozen witches and wizards marched past them, glaring and carrying loaded boxes in their arms. Percy was the last one onto the elevator and gave an imperious sniff as the doors closed.

“Professor, how many people work directly under the Minister?” Harry asked.

“Roughly half a dozen,” he replied.

Harry sighed, “I was afraid you were going to say that.”

Continuing past a small waiting room and into the outer office, he found all but one desk empty. Spotting a familiar face looking at him nervously, Harry smiled.

“Hi, Harry,” Penelope Clearwater said as he approached her desk.

“Hey, Penny,” Harry said. “It’s good to see you again. I take it you’re staying?”

“If you want me to,” Penny said with a small smile.

“Congratulations, you’re the new Senior Undersecretary,” Harry grinned.

Penny’s eyes went wide, and her jaw dropped.

“What?” she gasped. “But – but I’m just the mail-witch.”

Harry shrugged as he continued to smile.

“It’s not like I have a lot of people to choose from,” he said, gazing around the empty office.

“Well, if you’re sure,” Penny said, still looking a bit overwhelmed.

"This isn't going to cause problems between you and Percy, is it?" Harry asked.

"What? Oh! No, we broke up a while ago," Penny said. "Percy was too obsessed with his career to make time for me."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Harry said. "Though, to be honest, I always thought you could do better."

"Excuse me, Minister,"

Again, it took a moment for Harry to realize someone was referring to him. Turning around, he found Hestia Jones and three other Aurors waiting next to Dumbledore.

"Yes?" he asked.

"We're here to search yours and the Senior Undersecretary's offices," Hestia told him. "Madam Bones said you authorized it."

"Sure. Help yourselves," Harry said.

Smiling, Hestia nodded to the other Auror who made for the large office at the back of the room. When they weren't looking, Hestia turned to Harry and gave him a wink before following.

"Well, looks like we're gonna need new offices for a bit," Harry sighed.

"It shouldn't take long for them to search everything," Dumbledore said. "I expect you'll have your offices back by tomorrow."

"Alright," Harry said. "In the meantime, it looks like we have some new people to hire."

"Umbridge did all the hiring," Penny said. "The files for applicants would be in her office."

"Which we won't be able to get to until tomorrow. Hopefully," Harry sighed.

"I remember a few of the summer applicants," Penny said. "I could Floo them and see if they still want the position."

"Summer applicants?" Harry asked.

"Some of the older students will work at the Ministry over the Summer to get some experience," Dumbledore answered.

"That would work," Harry said. "They'd probably only have a job for a month anyways."

"Do you think Fudge will get his job back?" Penny asked.

"Even if he doesn't, someone else will still be Minister," Harry shrugged. "It's not like I'm going to be able to keep the job."

"Oh, well, should I still Floo them?" Penny asked.

"Sure," Harry said.

"I can refer you to some people with a bit more experience if you wish," Dumbledore said.

“That would be great,” Penny smiled, then looked at Harry and bit her lip. “Are you sure you want me to be your Senior Undersecretary?”

“I’m sure,” Harry smiled. “You were a great Head Girl, Penny. I know you’ll do a great job. If you don’t want it, though...”

“No,” Penny said quickly. “I’ll take the job. I’m just surprised you don’t want some more experienced.”

“I want someone I can trust,” Harry said.

Blushing, Penny smiled and ducked her head.

Suddenly, a paper airplane began circling around Harry’s head. Snatching it out of the air, he unfolded the parchment.

Minister Potter,

I would appreciate a meeting in my office at your earliest convenience.

Madam Amelia Bones

Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement

“Bones wants to see me,” Harry said.

“Would you like me to accompany you?” Dumbledore asked.

“Probably a good idea,” Harry sighed.

"I'll work on hiring a couple of people while you're gone," Penny said.

"Thanks," Harry smiled.

"I'll give you a list of names to contact when we get back from our meeting," Dumbledore told her.

Penny nodded and headed for one of the other offices while Harry and Dumbledore headed to the Floo. It was a short ride down one level to the offices of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Unlike when Harry had passed by earlier with Mr. Weasley, the Auror Department was now buzzing with activity.

Tonks spotted him from across the room and waved with a bright smile before tripping on the corner of a desk and disappearing out of view. Covering a smile, Harry waved back as she got to her feet and brushed herself off, her hair now bright red.

He followed Dumbledore past a maze of cubicles, ignoring the stares of the Aurors, and to the back of the room. The headmaster waited to the side as Harry raised his hand and knocked.

"Enter!" Bones barked.

"You wanted to see me?" Harry asked.

Looking into the office and seeing the hardbacked chairs on the other side of the desk, he couldn't help but feel like he was reporting to McGonagall for detention.

"Yes," she said, "Please, come in. You too, Dumbledore."

Dumbledore transfigured the chairs into comfortable wingbacks before both of them took a seat.

"I've sent Fudge and Umbridge home for the time being," Bones said. "Right now, I don't have enough evidence to hold them."

"Figures," Harry muttered.

"I understand your frustration," she sighed. "But we still have plenty of time to gather evidence. I'm certain the search of their offices will turn up something, and I'm very interested in finding out who sent you that order."

"Only a few people would have access to that document," Dumbledore said.

Bones nodded.

"I have my suspicions," she said. "I plan on conducting interviews soon, but right now, I have bigger concerns. McNair tried to kill one of my Aurors when they went to bring him in for questioning."

"Are they alright?" Harry asked.

"Shacklebolt managed to stop him in time," Bones said, sliding a piece of parchment across the desk towards Harry. "I need your approval to question him under Veritaserum."

Grabbing the quill off of her desk, he read over it quickly and then signed at the bottom.

"Thank you," Bones said, then slid over another piece of parchment. "I'd also like permission to begin patrolling Knockturn Alley."

“Wait, you’re not allowed to patrol there?” Harry asked incredulously.

Bones pursed her lips.

“No. And that’s something I’ve been fighting against for years,” she said. “The *former* Minister and his *associates* have business interests there. He didn’t want the Auror patrols interfering with business.”

Shaking his head in disgust, Harry signed the parchment.

“So, what’s being done about the other Death Eaters?” Harry asked.

“Right now, I can’t use your memory alone to arrest them,” Bones sighed. “All I can do is bring them in for questioning. However, since Mcnair was stupid enough to try and kill one of my Aurors, I can interrogate him. Once he confirms You-Know-Who is indeed back, and he was there as a witness, I can use that to start making arrests.”

“Okay,” Harry nodded. “Can we start checking Ministry employees for the Dark Mark?”

“Unfortunately, It’s not actually illegal to be a Death Eater,” Bones said.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Harry sighed.

“I know it may seem foolish, but there’s actually a very good reason for that,” Dumbledore said, to which Bones scoffed. “While I’m unaware of any Wizengamot members that are marked Death Eaters, many of them have family who are. As you can imagine, they would not want their family to be brought up on charges simply for making a mistake.”

“Taking that monster’s mark is not a mistake,” Bones hissed, glaring at Dumbledore.

“Not all of them have committed crimes, Amelia, or were given a choice,” Dumbledore said calmly.

“And we can weed those cases out through questioning and investigation,” Bones argued.

“It’s a moot point,” Dumbledore said. “You’ll never get the Wizengamot to agree.”

Privately, Harry agreed with Bones. Not all Death Eaters might be as evil as someone like Malfoy, but that didn’t mean they should just let them go. He decided to change the subject for now and bring it back up with her later, when Dumbledore wasn’t around.

“Let’s come back to that later,” Harry said. “What about the Imperious Curse? Do we have a way to detect if someone is under it?”

“Unfortunately, no,” Bones said, still visibly miffed. “The Goblin reportedly have a way to dispel it, but they aren’t sharing secrets with us.”

“Can we get someone to look into it?” Harry asked. “Even if we just have a way to tell if someone is under it, that could make a huge difference.”

“That would be something you need to bring up with the Department of Mysteries,” Bones said. “They’re the ones that do research for the Ministry.”

“Who’s the head of that?” Harry asked.

“Algeron Croaker,” Dumbledore replied.

“Neville’s uncle?” Harry asked. “The one that threw him out of a window to see if he had magic?”

Bones looked startled when Dumbledore nodded.

"Does Augusta know about that?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," Dumbledore smiled. "Put him in St. Mungo's for over a week if I recall correctly."

"I'd've done more than that," Bones said, shaking her head. "Alright, it looks like we're not going to be able to get any more done today. I'll send a note along to Janice when McNair's interrogation is done."

"Who?" Harry asked.

"Janice Hartford, she's your personal secretary," Bones replied.

"Oh, well, everyone quit except for Penelope Clearwater. You'll have to send it to her," he told her.

"They all quit?" she asked incredulously.

Harry shrugged.

"Despicable," Bones said in disgust. "I'll see if I can spare a couple of people to send up to you until you can rebuild your staff."

"Thanks," Harry said gratefully. "When do you want to meet again?"

"Unless something comes up, let's plan on tomorrow morning," Bones said.

“Sounds good,” Harry said.

Standing, he reached over the desk and shook her hand before he and Dumbledore left the office.

“I’ll help you as much as I can, but I’m afraid I need to get back to Hogwarts,” Dumbledore said. “I still have a lot of work to do to get ready for next year.”

“Alright,” Harry said. “Thanks, professor.”

“You’re quite welcome,” Dumbledore said as Harry exited the elevator.

Watching the doors close, Harry sighed and rubbed his eyes.

What the hell have I gotten myself into, he wondered.

Walking back into the main office, Harry was surprised to see Penny talking to Daphne Greengrass.

“Hey, Harry,” Penny said. “This is Daphne. I hired her to take over my old job. I contacted a few others, but they all had other jobs already.”

“Alright,” Harry sighed. “I talked to Madam Bones, and she said she’ll try and send up a couple of people to help.”

“Oh, good,” Penny said, looking relieved. “Did you get that list of names from Professor Dumbledore?”

“No, I didn’t. If you don’t get it by the end of the day, send him an owl,” Harry said, then turned to Daphne. “Sorry, but things are a little chaotic at the moment.”

“That’s fine. I enjoy a good challenge,” Daphne smirked.

“I’m sure you’ll get plenty of that working for me,” Harry smiled.

Checking his watch, he noticed that it was getting close to lunch time.

“Tell you what, how about I take you both out to lunch in London?” Harry asked.

“Muggle London?” Daphne asked.

“Yeah, is that alright?” Harry asked, wondering if she had a problem with Muggles.

“No, it’s fine,” she said quickly. “I’ve just never been there.”

“You’ve never been to Muggle London?” Penny asked incredulously.

Daphne looked a little embarrassed, so Harry decided to jump in.

“To be fair, neither have I,” he admitted.

“Wait, I thought you grew up with Muggles,” Penny said.

“I did, but they never took me anywhere,” he told her.

“Right, then you two are in for a treat,” Penny grinned. “There’s this great Italian place a couple blocks away.”

Following Penny to the elevator, they ascended to the Atrium. As they stepped out, Harry noticed a line of Aurors blocking a crowd of people from getting past the security desk. When they spotted Harry, all of them started yelling at once. Flashbulbs from cameras went off in rapid succession, nearly blinding him and the girls.

“Mr. Potter is it true you’ve taken over the government?”

“Did you really fire your entire staff?”

“Is it true you want to disband the Wizengamot?”

“Did you find proof Fudge was part of the Rotfang conspiracy?”

Reaching behind himself, Harry hammered the button for the elevator as the Aurors struggled to keep back the surging crowd. As soon as the doors opened, he grabbed Penny and Daphne by the arms and pulled them inside. Hitting the button for the first floor, the golden door slid closed, blocking out the sound.

“Bloody hell,” Harry said, rubbing his eyes to get rid of the floating blots in his vision.

“You know you’re going to have to talk to the press eventually,” Daphne said.

“I know,” Harry sighed.

“I can talk to my mother if you want,” she said. “She’s a reporter for the Prophet.”

“As long as she’s nothing like Skeeter, that’s fine,” Harry said, then grinned. “Looks like I have a new press secretary.”

“What?”

~

Using the Floo in the Minister’s office, Harry, Penny, and Daphne Flooed to the Leaky Cauldron before making their way straight out into London before anyone could recognize him. Daphne was surprisingly fascinated by almost everything as they walked passed the shops. Penny was happy to explain everything she asked about, telling her about everything from computers and tellies to cell phones and cars.

“Why didn’t we learn about any of this in Muggle Studies?” Daphne asked, staring at a red Ferrari in wonder.

“Hermione said Muggle Studies is about a hundred years behind,” Harry said.

“It is,” Penny agreed. “They haven’t updated the book since the late eighteen hundreds. Muggles have advanced leaps and bounds since then.”

“I never thought they’d be able to come this far without magic,” Daphne said, looking at a display of televisions playing a video of spaceships flying around and shooting lasers at each other.

“That’s not real,” Penny said, stifling a giggle. “That’s from a movie. It’s made up to tell a story.”

“I know what a movie is,” Daphne said, rolling her eyes. “Even Muggle can’t go to space.”

Harry and Penny shared a look before they both broke into laughter.

“What?” Daphne asked.

“Daphne, Muggles landed on the moon in nineteen sixty-nine,” Harry said.

“Really?” she asked, eyes wide as she looked over at Penny.

“Really,” Penny said. “If you want to come over to my flat sometime, I can show you the video.”

“I’d like that,” Daphne smiled. “My parents hate anything to do with Muggles.”

After a moment, she looked at Harry and Penny nervously.

“I didn’t mean that like it sounded. They don’t hate Muggles. They just don’t understand them,” she said.

“It’s alright,” Penny smiled. “Tell you what. How about you and Harry come over this weekend, and we can have a movie night.”

“That’d be great,” Daphne said, smiling excitedly. “I’ve never seen a movie before.”

“Sure, that sounds like fun,” Harry said. “I didn’t get to watch the telly that much at the Dursleys.”

“Why’s that?” Daphne asked.

Harry shrugged, “They don’t like anything to do with magic, and unfortunately, that includes me.”

“Then why do you stay with them?” she asked curiously. “There are a ton of families that would love to take you in.”

“Dumbledore put up wards there that protect me from Voldemort,” Harry said. “I’m not really sure how they work, but I have to stay there at least a month every Summer.”

“That sucks,” Penny said. “But at least you don’t have to stay there long.”

“You know, as Minister, you could have them investigated,” Daphne grinned.

Harry paused in his walking and smiled as he imagined the looks on their faces if Aurors showed up at their door.

“That would be a great idea,” Harry said, “if I was going to be Minister for more than a month.”

“You’re of age,” Penny said. “You could always run in the next election.”

“I doubt anyone would actually vote for me,” Harry said.

“I would,” she smiled. “You’re loads better than Fudge already. He spent the entire last month figuring out how to discredit you and Dumbledore. And don’t get me started on Umbridge. She’s made my job miserable ever since she found out I’m Muggleborn. I was already thinking about looking for a new job.”

“That woman is disgusting,” Daphne said. “Mother has her over for tea on occasion just because she’s so close to the Minister. She goes on about how Muggleborns and Half-bloods are ruining magical Britain, and she’s not even a Pureblood herself. Her mother was a Muggle.”

“You’re kidding!” Penny gasped.

“Nope,” Daphne said, shaking her head. “My father got her records from the Ministry. Her mother was a Muggle but died when she was a baby, and then her father remarried into a

Pureblood family a couple of years later. Umbridge tries to hide it, but the records are there if you look for them.”

“Huh,” Harry said. “That sounds a lot like Voldemort.”

“What do you mean?” Daphne asked.

“Well, Voldemort’s not a Pureblood either,” Harry said. “His father was a Muggle.”

“That’s crazy!” Penny exclaimed. “Then why does he hate Muggles and Muggleborns so much?”

“I don’t think he hates Muggleborns as much as he says he does,” Harry told her. “I think he just uses that to get Purebloods on his side since they have all of the real power.”

“Make sure you tell my mother about that when she interviews you,” Daphne said.

“Look, there’s the restaurant,” Penny smiled. “Trust me, you’re going to love the food here.”

~

After a delicious lunch, Harry and the girls made their way back to the Ministry. Shortly after they got there, two witches and a wizard sent by Bones showed up to help. There was also a mountain of letters from people and the press sitting next to Penny’s old desk.

The letters were a mix of people attacking him and telling him to get out of office, while others commended him for standing up to a corrupt Minister. A handful of letters had curses or hexes on them and were sent to the DMLE.

“Daphne, how soon can your mum get here?” Harry asked. “Some of these people have no idea what actually happened.”

“I’ll Floo her,” Daphne said.

Standing up, she walked into one of the offices while Harry took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes with a sigh.

“What’s wrong?” Penny asked.

“I don’t know where most of these people are getting their information from,” Harry said. “They’re accusing me of taking over the government and having half the Ministry thrown in Azkaban.”

“It’s just rumors,” Penny said, patting him on the back consolingly. “I bet Fudge is making things up to try and make you look bad. It certainly wouldn’t be the first time.”

“This is a nightmare,” Harry sighed. “Why did I think this was a good idea?”

“You never have been able to sit by while someone was doing something wrong,” Penny smiled.

Harry looked at Penny and smiled as she rubbed his shoulder.

“She’ll be here in an hour,” Daphne said, coming out of the office.

“Well, that should be fun,” Harry said.

Daphne's mother was an absolutely stunning witch. Her pure white robe wrapped tightly around her body, accentuating her sinful curves. Her demeanor was surprisingly warm and friendly, considering the impression he got from Daphne earlier.

"Good evening, Minister," she smiled, holding out her hand. "I'm Evangeline Greengrass."

"Just Harry is fine," Harry said, shaking her small, soft hand gently.

"Very well, Harry," Evangeline said, smiling widely.

Harry showed her over to the side of the office, where there were two comfortable leather chairs and a low table near the fireplace. As they took their seats, she pulled out a notepad and a quill. He was happy to note that the quill was a standard, black Dicta-Quill and the Quick Quotes Quill Rita was so fond of.

"Now, let's get started," Evangeline smiled.

~

An hour later, Harry walked Evangeline out of his temporary office with a smile still on his face.

"I have to say, that went a lot better than the last interview I gave," Harry said.

"It was a pleasure working with you," Evangeline said. "I hope you remember to call me first the next time you have need of the press."

"I definitely will," Harry said.

Smiling, she glanced over at Daphne before looking back at him.

“Would you mind if my daughter walked me down to the Atrium? I’d like to have a quick word with her,” she asked.

“Not at all,” Harry said.

Nodding in thanks, Daphne stood up and followed her mother to the elevator.

“I take it that went well?” Penny asked, coming to stand beside him.

“I think so,” Harry said, his smile dropping.

“Is something wrong?” Penny asked.

“I thought it went great. Evangeline seemed nice enough,” Harry shrugged. “I just – after what Daphne told us about her parents at lunch, it’s not what I was expecting. I’m wondering if she only acted that way so I would keep working with her.”

“Well, I guess we’ll find out tomorrow when the article comes out,” Penny said.

“Tonight,” Harry corrected her. “Evangeline seemed pretty certain the Prophet would want to run a special edition for this.”

“I guess it *is* pretty big news,” Penny grinned. “I wonder what the heading will be? ‘Harry Potter takes over Ministry.’”

“Merlin, I hope not,” Harry said, shaking his head with a smile.

“Boy-Who-Lived becomes Man-Who-Leads,” Penny said, waving her arm dramatically.

“Oh, please, no,” Harry groaned.

Penny giggled at the pleading look on his face. A couple of minutes later, Daphne returned alone.

“Mother said the interview went well?” she asked.

“I think it did,” Harry said. “She was a lot nicer than I was expecting.”

“That really didn’t come out the way I wanted it to earlier,” Daphne sighed. “My father is a staunch traditionalist, and my mother just goes along with it, but neither of them are Pureblood fanatics like the Malfoys. They just want to keep our worlds separate.”

“I think I get it,” Penny said.

Daphne nodded before her pale cheek turned a light pink.

“I should warn you now, Potter. My mother – recommended – that I try and get close to you,” Daphne said. “Don’t get any ideas, though. You’re not my type, and I’m not marrying for political reasons like my parents did.”

“I – You – What?” Harry stammered.

Penny burst out in laughter, breaking the tension.

“Minister?”

Harry turned around and smiled at Hestia.

“Yes?” he asked.

“We’re finished searching the offices,” Hestia told him, holding out a scroll. “Here’s a list of everything we’re taking as evidence.”

As Harry took the scroll, the other Aurors left the two offices, each levitating a stack of boxes behind them. He blinked as the elevator enlarged itself to accommodate everyone.

“Is there anything left?” Harry asked.

“We left most of the furniture,” Hestia joked.

Smiling and giving him a jaunty salute, she joined the other Aurors in the elevator.

“Come on, I’ll help you move into your office,” Penny said.

With Penny and Daphne helping, it only took Harry a few minutes to gather the few things he had in his temporary office. The Minister’s office was huge in comparison and decorated with ornate, gold gilded furniture. Even the molding on the walls was gilded, making Harry feel like he was sitting in a palace instead of an office.

Once everything was settled, he sat down at the desk and started making a list of everything he wanted to accomplish in his thirty days as Minister. It was a long list, and he didn’t know if he could do all of it, but he would certainly try.

Harry spent a couple of hours working out what he needed to focus on first before Mr. Weasley came to tell him it was time to head home. To avoid running into the crowd that was likely still

waiting for him in the Atrium, they used the Floo in his office to go to the Leaky Cauldron. From there, Mr. Weasley Apparated them to the park just outside Grimmauld Place.

There was a mix of reactions when he stepped into the kitchen. Sirius, the twins, Tonks, Ron, and Ginny, thought kicking Fudge out of office and taking his job was the greatest prank ever devised. Mrs. Weasley and some of the older members of the Order thought he should've left them to handle things. Hermione alternated between scolding him and praising him in the same breath, leaving him with a bemused smile.

"I can't believe you're the youngest Minister in history," Hermione said, practically bouncing in her chair. "Oh, I hope this doesn't cause problems for Professor Dumbledore."

"Well, I got him his job back as Chief Warlock," Harry said.

"Really?" Hermione asked, surprised. "Well, maybe you can let him take over as Minister for you."

"I can't," Harry said, shaking his head. "I'm stuck with the job for twenty-nine more days."

"What happens if you can't prove Fudge was behind the Dementor attack?" Tonks asked.

"Fudge gets everything I own, and I'll be banished from the Wizarding World," Harry said.

Sitting back in her chair, Tonks whistled.

"Don't worry," Harry said at the concerned looks directed at him. "Amelia already has evidence that he knew about it, and she's looking through a lot more."

"It's true," Hestia said. "We took about two dozen boxes of documents from Fudge's old office today. I didn't see everything, but what I did see makes me wish someone had done this years ago."

"Let's change the conversation, shall we?" Mrs. Weasley asked.

At that moment, half a dozen owls swooped in through the enchanted window and dropped copies of the Evening Prophet on the table. Looking over at Hermione's copy, Harry saw a big picture of himself standing in the Atrium from earlier in the day on the front page under the title 'Potter Takes A Stand.'

Mrs. Weasley huffed and walked back over to the stove, stirring the pot vigorously.

Hermione held her paper slightly to the side so both of them could read it together. Harry was immensely relieved to see that Evangeline hadn't twisted any of his words. She detailed everything that happened in the courtroom and immediately afterwards, expressing concern over how Fudge had tried to railroad an innocent young wizard from a prominent family. Somehow, she even managed to get a picture of the parchment ordering Dementors to Little Whinging.

While Evangeline took a wait and see attitude towards Harry's ability as Minister, she was optimistic. All in all, Harry was happy with the article. The chatter around the table picked up as people finished reading and began discussing it. Harry noticed that a few of the disapproving looks he'd been getting were gone now, replaced with sympathy and grudging acceptance.

After dinner, Hermione dragged Harry off to the library so they could read up on exactly what powers the Minister for Magic had.

"This is so fascinating," Hermione said, gathering an armful of books. "Imagine all the good you could do."

"I'm focused on staying in the Wizarding World and fighting Voldemort right now," Harry reminded her. "I'm only Minister for thirty days."

"I know," Hermione said, biting her lip. "But, if you have time, maybe you can change a few laws. Did you know Half-bloods and Muggleborns pay almost twice as much in taxes as Purebloods? It gets worse with businesses. It's almost a third more in taxes to run a shop compared to Purebloods."

"I'll see what I can do," Harry nodded.

"I could do it," Hermione offered. "You'd still have to present it to the Wizengamot, but I could write it up for you."

"You know, I could get you a job in the Minister's office for the Summer if you want," Harry told her, smiling.

"Really?" Hermione asked excitedly.

"Sure," Harry shrugged. "Daphne is working there for the Summer."

"Daphne Greengrass works in your office?" she asked.

"Yeah, Penny hired her today," Harry said.

"I get along with her pretty well in Arithmancy and Runes, and Penny was always nice to me," Hermione said thoughtfully. "What would my job be?"

Harry shrugged, "You can be my research assistant."

“So, just like at school,” Hermione teased.

They both chuckled before Harry straightened up and smoothed out his clothes.

“So, will you take the job, Ms. Granger?” Harry asked.

Smiling brightly, Hermione threw herself forward and hugged him tightly.

~

The next day, Harry and Hermione Flooed directly from the Leaky Cauldron to the Minister’s office. Stepping into the outer office, Penny and a couple of other secretaries had arrived early. Already, there was a three foot tall pile of mail sitting on one of the desks.

“Morning, Penny,” Harry said.

“Morning,” Penny smiled. “Hi, Hermione. I’m guessing you’re here to help?”

“If that’s alright,” Hermione said, looking around nervously.

“Of course,” Penny said. “Right now, we can use all the help we can get.”

She pointed to the pile of mail with a grimace as two more letters flew in and landed on top.

“What is that?” Hermione asked.

“Mail for Harry,” Penny sighed. “I hoped there would be less after that article came out.”

Someone scoffed behind them.

"Not likely," Daphne said. "Morning, Potter, Granger."

"Morning, Daphne," Hermione said.

"What job did Potter give you?" Daphne asked.

"I'm his research assistant," Hermione said. "How did you know I was working here?"

"You two have been attached at the hip since he saved you from that Troll back in first year. I would've been more surprised if you weren't here," Daphne said, then turned to Penny. "Why aren't you in your office?"

"Have you seen it?" Penny asked, to which Daphne shook her head. "Umbridge painted the walls bright pink, and there are kittens on plates all over the walls. It gave me nightmares last night. I'd rather work on the floor than sit in there all day."

Daphne snorted while Harry shook his head.

"I'll call Magical Maintenance and have them redecorate it," Harry said.

"You can ask them in person," Penny told him. "Madam Bones sent a message just before you got here. You have a meeting with the department Heads in an hour."

"Alright," Harry sighed.

"I spoke with my mother last night," Daphne added. "We think it might be a good idea for you to send her a kind of daily progress report so she can write a running article about what you're doing at the Ministry. This way, people know that you're not sitting in your office having parties or something."

“Fine,” Harry nodded. “Anything else?”

“Oh! How could I forget!” Hermione exclaimed.

“What?” Harry asked.

“House Elves!” Hermione said. “Harry, I could free the House Elves!”

“Hermione...,” Harry said softly, only to trail off when she glared at him.

“Free the House Elves?” Daphne asked. “Granger, what do you actually know about House Elves?”

“I know they shouldn’t be slaves!” Hermione huffed indignantly.

“If you go in front of the Wizengamot with that sort of wilful ignorance, they will tear you apart,” Daphne said, rolling her eyes. “If you want to get anything done in this government, you need to understand our world before you try and change it. Anything else, and people will vote against you on principle. Would you want some Magical showing up in your government and telling you how to run things when they don’t even know what a car is?”

Hermione blushed, her mouth opening and closing several times soundlessly before she looked down, chagrined.

“But slavery isn’t right,” she muttered.

“And what happens to those House Elves when they’re suddenly thrown out on the streets after centuries of living as slaves?” Daphne asked. “Merlin, Granger, you’re supposed to be

smart. You go in front of the Wizengamot like this, and anyone opposing you will make you look so bad it'll be years before anyone takes you seriously."

"I agree with you, Hermione, but Daphne's right," Penny told her gently. "There's a lot of issues you need to think about before trying to free House Elves. You also have to consider that most of the Wizengamot own House Elves and they're not going to want to get rid of them."

"Alright," Hermione said, holding her hands up in surrender. "What do I need to do?"

"Right now, the biggest thing is keeping the government running," Daphne said. "If you want to work on freeing House Elves, you're going to have to do it on your own time. Potter's going to need all the help he can get if he wants to actually make some serious changes around here."

"I suppose you're right," Hermione said contritely, then looked up at Harry. "Sorry."

"It's alright," Harry said.

"Can we get to work now?" Daphne asked. "We've got a small mountain of letters to get through, not to mention whatever Potter has for us after his meeting."

"Speaking of which, I should go get ready for that," Harry said.

Harry was only in his office for a couple of minutes when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," Harry called.

"Minister," Tonks smirked as she poked her head in the door.

"You're enjoying this far too much," Harry smiled, shaking his head.

“Hey, this is the most exciting thing to happen since I started working here,” Tonks said as she walked into the office. “Madam Bones wants to know if you’re free to meet with her before the meeting.”

“Do you know what she wants to talk about?” Harry asked.

“I think it’s about the evidence we got yesterday, but I’m not sure,” Tonks replied.

Harry sighed and stood from his chair, “Alright.”

Harry and Tonks walked back into the outer office just as one of the envelopes from the pile leapt up. Folding itself into a mouth with pointed teeth, it growled and chomped at the air as it chased after one of the secretaries Amelia had sent over. As the witch shrieked and ran, Tonks whipped out her wand and cast a spell that caused it to burst into a shower of confetti.

“This is ridiculous!” Daphne huffed. “That’s the third one.”

“Leave them for now,” Tonks said. “I’ll let Bones know and see if she can spare a couple of Curse Breakers to go over them.”

“Thank you,” Penny said, sighing in relief.

Giving her a smile, Tonks grabbed an empty envelope from a nearby desk and used her wand to send the scraps of parchment into it.

“You might want to put a shield over that pile in case something in there is set to explode,” Tonks said.

Penny’s eyes widened, and she quickly threw a shield over the pile as Harry and Tonks made their way to the elevator.

“Do you know where Bones’ office is?” Tonks asked.

“No,” Harry said.

“Alright, I need to drop this off first, and I’ll show you,” Tonks said, holding up the envelope.

“What are you going to do with it?” Harry asked.

“Give it to one of our investigators,” Tonks said as the doors opened. “Hopefully, we can find out who sent it.”

Following Tonks through the maze of cubicles, they made their way to one of the smaller office in the back.

“Hey, Sara?” Tonks called.

“Yeah?” a tall, broad shouldered witch with a shapely figure asked.

“I’ve got another one for you,” Tonks said.

“You’re kidding,” Sara sighed. “Just put it in the box.”

Sara pointed to a box in the corner of her office that was over flowing with letters.

“Are all of those from my office?” Harry asked.

Sara looked up from her desk, her eyes widening before she jumped to her feet.

“Er, yes, Minister,” Sara stammered. “I’m getting through them as fast as I can, but it’s a slow process.”

“That’s alright,” Harry said, a little overwhelmed by her reaction. “And it’s just Harry.”

“Yes, sir,” Sara said.

Snickering, Tonks dropped the envelope onto the pile.

“Well, I better get wonder boy here over to see Bones,” Tonks said. “Thanks, Sara.”

Harry gave the witch a smile and waved as he followed Tonks further into the Auror office.

“Is she always like that?” Harry asked.

“Nope,” Tonks said, a smirk growing on her face. “Maybe she fancies you?”

Harry rolled his eyes as she laughed. A moment later, she knocked on the door to another office.

“Enter!” Amelia yelled.

“The Minister’s here to see you, ma’am,” Tonks said, poking her head through the door.

“Oh, good. Send him in,” Amelia said.

As Tonks held the door open, she winked at Harry as he passed and then closed the door behind him.

“Have a seat,” Amelia said.

Harry sat across from her, noticing that her office was much smaller and far more utilitarian than his.

“I heard you’ve had some trouble with your mail?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Harry sighed. “We’re getting quite a few cursed items in. Tonks mentioned you might be able to send over a couple of Curse Breakers?”

“I’ll send all four over,” Amelia said. “I don’t have much use for them at the moment.”

“Thanks,” Harry said.

Nodding, Amelia made a quick note and then tapped it with her wand to turn it into a paper airplane. It took off from the desk and zipped out through the mail slot in the middle of the door.

“We’ve been going through the evidence we found in Fudge and Umbridge’s office and found some very interesting things,” Amelia said. “Umbridge had a list of names and information she used to blackmail people in the Ministry. One of them happens to be John McClintock, the current Warden of Azkaban.”

Harry sat forward and rested his elbows on his knees.

“Do you think he was the one that sent me that order?” Harry asked.

"I suspect he did," Amelia nodded. "He's one of the few people that would've had access to it."

"Have you talked to him?" Harry asked.

"Not yet," Amelia said slowly. "If I were to investigate, it would have to be official. Despite his intentions - if he was behind it - he still broke the law. John's a good Auror and a good man. I always wondered why he volunteered for the job as Warden. Usually, that job is given out as a sort of punishment."

"What did Umbridge have on him?" Harry asked.

Amelia paused for a moment before she sighed.

"Five years ago, his youngest son was bitten by a Werewolf that he'd arrested previously," she explained. "He paid off the Healers that treated him to keep it secret, but Umbridge knows someone in records that was sending her information. Something else I need to take care of. Without a court order, no one should send patient information to anyone outside of immediate family."

"Bloody hell," Harry said, rubbing his face. "How did she get so many connections?"

"Blackmail and bribes, mostly," Amelia said. "I need to know how you want to handle this."

Harry sat back in his chair and crossed his arms, wishing for the umpteenth time he hadn't taken the job.

"Is there any solid evidence he was involved in sending that order to me?" Harry asked.

"No," Amelia said.

“Then I think we have bigger issues to focus on at the moment,” Harry said.

Amelia’s face remained passive, but her shoulder sagged visibly.

“Very well,” she said, making a note.

“Just as a precaution, we should probably have him reassigned,” Harry smiled.

“I’ll see to it,” Amelia said, her lips twitching. “Moving on, the evidence against Fudge is less clear. We know from his bank records he’s making a lot more than he should, but we can’t prove where the money came from.”

Harry sighed and nodded, “Have you found anything more about the Dementor attack?”

“We know he signed the order, but we don’t have evidence that he knew you were living at the address listed,” Amelia said. “Of course, we still have a lot of evidence to go through. I just wanted to give you an update before the department Head meeting.”

“Thanks,” Harry nodded. “Where are Fudge and Umbridge now?”

“Umbridge is still in a holding cell and will remain there until all of the evidence is collected, and she can be tried. Fudge, we didn’t have enough to hold for the moment, but he’s on a court order not to leave the country. We still have enough to try him for gross negligence, but I can’t hold him unless we can prove it was intentional.”

Harry nodded. He was fairly certain Fudge signing the order alone was enough to satisfy the magic of the law he invoked, but it would be nice to have more on him. It would certainly make him feel safer from being kicked out of Magical Britain.

There was still time, though. It wasn’t time to panic - yet, he thought.

"Is there anything--"

Harry broke off when the door to the office was flung open, and an Auror rushed inside.

"Ma'am, one of our patrols was attacked in Knockturn Alley," he panted. "Gorga is on his way to St. Mungo's."

"Send in all but one of the on-call teams," Amelia said briskly. "I want that alley shut down until we have control of it."

"Yes, ma'am," the wizard nodded.

"I'm sorry, I have to go," Amelia said.

"It's fine," Harry said.

Amelia nodded, "I'll see you at the meeting."

Sighing as she left, Harry left the office and made his way back to the elevator, dodging Aurors as they rushed about the room. Just as the elevator doors closed, he saw Tonks and Hestia with a Portkey.

Back on his floor, Harry exited the elevator thoughtfully.

"Hey, Penny?"

"Yes?" she asked, looking away from the Curse Breakers going over the mail.

"What does it take to get a license to make Portkeys?" Harry asked.

"It's just a few forms to fill out, but they have to be approved," she replied.

"Can I approve them if I'm applying?" Harry asked.

"I think so," Penny said, furrowing her brow. "Why?"

"I just want to get as much out of this as I can," Harry said. "I should get my Apparatioin license too, now that I think about it."

"I'll check with legal and let you know," Penny told him.

"Thanks," Harry said. "How's the mail coming?"

Penny sighed, "They've found over a dozen so far. Two of them were really nasty."

"You should schedule the wards to be checked, Minister," a blonde wizard with a prominent scar along his cheek said. "These really shouldn't have made it into the office."

"How much you wanna bet Fudge lowered the wards before he left?" Daphne asked.

Closing his eyes, Harry reached out to the wards with his magic. What he found was disturbing. They felt old and weak. Like they'd been left to rot for decades.

"I don't think so," Harry said, rubbing his forehead. "I don't think Fudge ever had the wards checked."

“They’re supposed to be checked once a year,” the Curse Breaker said with a frown.

“Brenda,” Harry said, turning to one of the older secretaries. “Can you schedule a time for someone to come in and check the wards?”

“Yes, sir,” Brenda, a kindly, middle aged witch, smiled. “Is there a specific time you’d like them to come?”

“As soon as possible,” Harry said.

Nodding, Brenda made a note in her planner.

“Where’s Hermione?” he asked, turning back to Penny.

“I sent her down to records for some documents,” Penny said.

Harry nodded, “Alright, I’m going to my office for a bit.”

“Don’t forget your meeting,” Penny said.

“I won’t,” Harry said.

After relaxing in his office for a little while, Harry got back up and headed to the third floor with Penny. She would be taking notes for him while he dealt with the meeting. Finding the conference room, they were greeted by a smiling Mr. Weasley.

“Good morning,” he said brightly.

“Morning,” Harry said.

“I thought I’d get here early and introduce you to a few people,” Mr. Weasley smiled. “You know Amos and Amelia already. Amos took over for Ludo a few months ago. The older witch is Mofilda Hopkirk, Head of the Department of Magical Education. The man with the brown hair is Gethsemane Prickle, the new Head of the Department for the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures. The blonde wizard is Greg Goreman, Head of International Magical Cooperation. The balding wizard is Dirk Cresswell, Head of the Liaison for Goblin Relations. And finally, the red haired witch is Julia Edgecomb, Head of the Department of Magical Transportation.”

Mr. Weasley paused and looked around for a moment.

“It looks like Amelia is running a bit late, and we’re still missing one more,” he said.

“Sorry we’re late,” Amelia said, striding into the room just as Harry opened his mouth to explain why she was late.

Behind her was a slim, elderly wizard in a plain black robe. His eyes were light blue and sharp as he looked around the room, his gaze landing on Harry for a long moment.

“Minister, this is Saul Croaker, Head of the Department of Mysteries,” Amelia said.

“Croaker?” Harry asked, shaking the man’s hand. “Are you the one that threw Neville out of a window to see if he had magic?”

Amelia startled and looked at Saul accusingly while the man himself smiled.

“That was my brother, Algeron,” Saul said. “I assure you, my sister, Augusta, made her displeasure over that quite clear. Poor Algie spent three nights in St. Mungo’s and couldn’t sit for a week.”

"Oh, sorry," Harry said.

"Quite alright," Saul told him.

"So, what does the Department of Mysteries actually do?" Harry asked.

"That's the question, isn't it?" Saul asked, smiling. "Perhaps we can discuss it later this week, over lunch?"

"Sure," Harry said.

"Minister, perhaps we should get started?" Amelia suggested.

"Right," Harry nodded. "Are your Aurors alright?"

"Two injured, but nothing serious," Amelia said as they took their seats. "Both of them will be back to work tomorrow."

"Did something happen?" Mr. Weasley asked.

"Just a bit of trouble in Knockturn Alley," Amelia said.

"I've said for years that place needs to be cleaned up," Amos said. "It's about time our Aurors were allowed to do their job."

There was a rumble of agreement among the others, except for Julia, who huffed and folded her arms over her chest.

"Let's get started, shall we?" Amelia asked.

The first hour of the meeting was fairly boring, with each Head talking about the problems they had in their department. Harry made a few notes on what he thought he could improve easily, but there wasn't a lot that really concerned him. Most of what they needed was more funding, which had to come from the Wizengamot.

Amelia talked a bit about what she was working on but didn't go much into the details. There was predictable outrage when she mentioned the charges against Umbridge from all but one. Again, Julia huffed, though she kept her quiet. Frowning, Harry decided to push her buttons a bit to see how she reacted.

"Amelia," Harry said. "I was doing some research into the last war with Voldemort-"

Harry rolled his eyes when Dirk nearly fell out of his chair and Julia gasped dramatically.

"Voldemort," he repeated, "was able to shut down the Floo to the homes he was attacking so they couldn't escape. Do we know how he did that?"

"No," Amelia frowned. "It was suspected that he had someone on the inside, possibly under the Imperious, but we never found out who."

"Can we come up with a way to make sure that doesn't happen again?" Harry asked. "Increase the guards in that department? Put policies in place so no one works alone? Maybe put up wards that can detect someone under the Imperious."

Predictably, Julia narrowed his eyes and sat up straighter.

"Unfortunately, no such ward exists," Saul said.

“Putting new policies in place would certainly help,” Amelia added. “We don’t currently have a guard outside the ones in the Atrium, but I’d be happy to assign one once I have the budget.”

“I’ll work on getting that as soon as possible,” Harry told her.

“You can’t be taking this seriously!” Julia burst out. “Are you really going to listen to this *boy*?”

Harry bristled at the word his uncle used throughout his childhood.

“Excuse me?” Harry asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Madam Edgecombe, whether you like it or not, Mr. Potter is the Minister,” Amelia said firmly. “If it bothers you that much, I’m sure we can find a replacement for you.”

Huffing, Julia looked around for support but found none. Folding her arms, she sulked back into her seat with a baleful glare.

It’s going to be a long month, Harry thought.