

A Moment in Time

Chapter 3

Harry shivered as he came out of the secret hatch that was located in the floor of the Shrieking Shack. That night was particularly chilly. Even though he was wearing a sweater, it did little to alleviate the chill. His skin goosebumped as it was exposed to the frigid air. The secret tunnel had been cold as well, but at least it was protected from the wind. He could hear the loose siding boards creaking and rattling as the wind battered the old, rundown house. It was quite drafty as well. He could already feel the wind hitting his face from the many holes and broken windows. He was not looking forward to leaving it, but he had little choice. Waving his wand, he placed a Warming Charm on himself. It wasn't the best solution, but it was better than nothing. Patting his bag that was at his side to make sure that it was still there, he readied himself and left the house.

Immediately, his eyes began to water from the cold wind and dust hitting his face. 'Why couldn't Hogwarts be in Bermuda?' he silently asked himself. While Harry could have Apparated from the Shack, he realized that Hogwarts's wards were so powerful that they affected his Apparating even though he was beyond their reach. When he had tried in the past, it felt like moving through water, and he never appeared exactly where he wanted. Moving further into Hogsmeade would prevent that from happening. As he stuffed his hands underneath his armpits to try to keep them warm, he looked around the small village. By that time, most businesses were closed. Only the Three Broomsticks remained open. Looking through the window, he could see that there were plenty of customers trying to warm themselves with their choice of alcoholic drinks. The few people that were out on the street were hunched over to avoid the worst of the wind as they quickly made their way back home or into the bar. Harry walked a little bit further until he was in the clear. Concentrating, he did a little spin and disappeared from the empty street.

A soft crack let everyone nearby know that he had arrived at his destination. He quickly stepped away from Diagon Alley's Apparation point so as to not muck up the new arrivals. That time of night and being so cold, he didn't think that there would be many. True to his suspicion, the Alley seemed nearly deserted. Like in Hogsmeade, only the local bar was hopping with activity. Sadly, Harry wasn't there for a firewhiskey or even a hot cup of tea. No, he was there to meet up with the Goblins. Redoing his sad, little Warming Charm while looking back at the boisterous bar with longing, he sighed and carried on.

Down he went on the cobbled street, walking at a brisk pace, and using his hand to help shield his eyes from the wind. Most of the shops were closed. On each side of the street, shop fronts were dark with the shades or curtains drawn. Only the gas lamp poles placed periodically down the street provided any light. The spookiness of the situation only motivated him to move faster. There was always something about Diagon Alley at night that creeped him out. On a night like that was especially true. The wind was whipping through the street and shops, creating a cacophony of howling and lamentful sounds. Even though he knew that he was being ridiculous,

he still had his head on a swivel, checking every corner and side alley for any sign of trouble. Thankfully, none were found before the white building came into view.

Not bothering to stand around and bask in its magnificence, Harry quickly walked through the door. He noticed that the Goblin guard didn't seem bothered by the coldness or the wind. As Harry entered, he sighed in relief as warmth spread throughout his shivering body. Unfortunately, he didn't have time to sit down and really thaw out. To a Goblin, time was money. He walked up to the teller who looked back at him and nodded. He called out only for another ugly Goblin to come up to him. "Right on time, Mister Granger ... Excellent!" the Goblin said as he gave a toothy smile. "Right this way."

Harry was led into a side room where he pulled the large trunk from his expanded bag. The Goblin opened it up and began examining them. "Good quality," he muttered. Once he was satisfied that his time wasn't being wasted, he pulled out a contract stating that each gemstone would be examined and bought at 70% of its value. The rest of the 30% was being taken as fees and profits for when they were eventually sold. The contract also stated that they would be evaluated and given a fair price. It was a standard contract for such a thing.

"Sign here," he said in his croaky voice. Harry quickly signed.

"Please store the gold in my vault and send an invoice by owl," Harry requested. The Goblin nodded while examining the contract.

"Very well. That concludes our business tonight," the Goblin told him before escorting him back into the main part of the bank. With that done, Harry bid him goodnight and left the bank. Harry left with a bit of pep in his step knowing that he'd have plenty of gold that summer for his planned expedition. As he exited the bank, he noticed that the wind had picked up even further. It seemed that the whole of the UK was experiencing the same bad weather. He was about to walk back to the Apparation point when he suddenly stopped. Harry could have sworn that he heard a feminine yell. It was very difficult to tell from the howling of the wind. The Goblin guard didn't give any indication that he heard anything. Although to be fair, a human could be attacked right in front of the bank doors and he wouldn't give two shits. Harry listened closer, but he had a hard time hearing anything other than the wind and the wooden shop signs swinging violently.

Then he heard it again. It sounded like a girl's scream. He braced himself against the onslaught and braved the harsh gale. His clothes whipped around as he ran across the street and entered Knockturn Alley. In his time, Harry had heard stories about how dangerous Knockturn Alley was. Most of it was from Mrs. Weasley as a way to keep her kids from going in there. While it wasn't as dangerous as she had led him to believe, it wasn't a place where young children should go. There were many shady shops in the alley. Not only that, but it was the main place where Death Eaters, blood purists, and other criminals liked to spend their time.

His eyes were watering as he ran headfirst into the wind. He passed several shops before he heard the scream again. It came from right behind him. He turned around and went into the side

alley right next to Borgin and Burkes. At the far end, he could see a skirmish. Two large and dark figures were hunched over while laughing uproariously. They were grabbing and pulling on something. Harry held his wand at the ready while quietly stalking closer. It was the first time that night that he was actually thankful for the wind, as it masked the sound of his steps. As he got closer, he saw a woman on the ground writhing around while the two men ripped at her clothing. She was screaming and kicking at their legs while they tore at her clothes. She must have connected with a particularly painful spot because one of the men grunted painfully while holding his crotch.

"She get ya good, mate?" the other one laughed at his friend's mishap. Harry saw the injured man lean over before a loud slap was heard. A feminine cry was soon followed.

"Looks like we gotta teach this bitch a lesson, huh?" he said before going back to what he was doing before. Having seen enough, Harry jumped into action.

He aimed his wand and sent a silent Incendio at one of them. A jet of fire erupted from the tip of his wand and hit the injured man in the back of the head. Almost instantly, his entire head of hair burst into flames. His scream could easily be heard over the wind. Harry didn't even have time to enjoy the scene of the man swatting at his head, trying to put out the flames. His friend turned his wand on Harry and fired a swirling purple curse at him. Harry was ready for it though. With some level of expertise, Harry parried the curse and sent it at the man who was on fire. Not being able to see it, the man stood no chance when his friend's curse slammed into his back. He fell to the floor writhing in pain before his movement stopped.

"You'll pay for that, you son of a ..."

Suddenly, the front of his chest exploded in a burst of meat and blood. Some of it even sprayed on Harry's face. After a second, Harry saw that he had a fist-sized hole in his chest. The man swayed for a moment before falling to the ground and exposing the woman who was still on the ground and pointing her wand. Harry spat onto the ground before quickly cleaning himself of the blood splatter. Once he was clean, he got his first good look at the woman. His eyes nearly bugged out when he saw a young version of Draco Malfoy's mother, Narcissa. Her face was bloody, and she looked ready to pass out. She was also shivering dangerously from the lack of clothing. Most of her clothes had been torn off of her.

Seeing that he needed to act fast, Harry Transfigured their bodies into stones and placed them in his pocket. He then vanished Narcissa's torn clothes that were scattered on the ground. Seeing Narcissa's head begin to sway, he next moved onto her.

Harry wasted no time going over to her and lifting her up bridal style. When she was in his arms, she seemed to realize that she wasn't in danger anymore. Instead, she snuggled in, desperate for any kind of warmth. Knowing that the Knockturn Alley Apparation point was close by, Harry quickly made his way over to it and disappeared. One of the first things that Harry did, on Hermione's suggestion of course, when he arrived at this time was to secure a safe house

for himself. It was fairly easy for him. All he did was find a rich muggle that owned way too many properties and picked out a small cottage that wasn't being used. Harry then placed it underneath a Fidelius Charm to keep it from being found by anyone, especially its rightful owner. Unfortunately, the electricity was no longer able to be used, but that was alright. Harry had already replaced the appliances and lights with magical equivalents. The cottage wasn't anything spectacular, but it was very nice and homey in its own way. He doubted that it would ever be missed by the very wealthy businessman he took it from. Besides, he needed a place to stay during summers after all ... when he wasn't out trying to secure their futures that is.

He appeared in the back garden which was also hidden behind the Fidelius and quickly went inside. He felt Narcissa's grip on the back of his neck loosening. He went over to the couch and gently placed her down. From what he knew about the woman before time traveling, she would have definitely been wearing a robe of some kind. That was now gone. Her skirt was gone. The only things that she was wearing on her lower half were a slightly torn pair of panties and leather boots that went to just below her knees. Her upper half still had the remains of what was once a white, silk blouse, but was torn open revealing a matching bra. Harry left and came back with a magical medkit. Harry used his wand to siphon off the blood on her face. By that point, she was barely conscious. From the lump on her head, she must have taken a serious blow. Thankfully, her face wasn't in very bad shape. The blood was likely from a bloody nose. Still, he cleaned her and patched her up to the best of his ability. He placed bruise remover cream on the welt on her head, causing her to wince.

"Sorry," Harry muttered as he worked. She nodded slightly, closing her eyes. By the time he was done, she was already asleep. Harry removed her boots and saw that her skin still had goosebumps all over it. Touching her arm, he felt how cold her body was. Harry grabbed a blanket and threw it over her before quickly lighting the fireplace. Since the room wasn't very big, it warmed up in no time. Eventually, he heard a sigh from the sleeping woman before she snuggled into the blanket further and began to lightly snore. Harry sighed as well. It wasn't from being warm and content though. He knew it would be a while before he could rest in his own warm, comfy bed. Sitting down, he waited for Narcissa to wake up so that he could find out what was going on.