

Chapter 48

The steam rose in lazy curls from the surface of the bathtub as Harry twisted the taps one last time. The water had been running for a few minutes now, filling the large tub steadily. He dipped his hand in to test the heat, feeling the warmth spread up his arm. It felt good, just right for washing away the day. Blood and dirt still clung to his skin in places, and he knew Tonks was in even worse shape.

He reached over to turn off the heat when her soft voice came from behind him.

"I'd like it a bit hot if that's alright with you."

Harry paused and glanced over his shoulder. Tonks stood there completely naked, her body still marked with faint traces of the battle. Bruises bloomed across her ribs and shoulder where curses had clipped her. Her hair was back to its natural brown, damp with sweat and clinging to her neck. She looked tired but determined, her eyes fixed on him with that familiar mix of vulnerability and want.

He let his gaze drift over her for a moment, taking in the curve of her breasts, the flare of her hips, and the way her skin still carried the flush of adrenaline. A small smile tugged at his lips.

"Sure," he said gently.

He turned the heat up a notch and let the water run hotter for another minute. Steam thickened in the air, making the bathroom feel smaller and more intimate. When it felt right, he shut everything off and stood up straight. Water dripped from his fingers onto the tile floor.

"It should be good now," he told her.

Tonks nodded and walked over to him without hesitation. Her hands came up to the hem of his shirt, tugging it upward. Harry helped her, lifting his arms so she could pull it over his head. She tossed it aside and went for his belt next, her fingers steady despite everything that had happened today. He stepped out of his trousers as she pushed them down, until they were both standing there bare.

Neither of them spoke. They didn't need to. Harry took her hand and they stepped into the tub together. The water was hot enough to make his skin tingle as he lowered himself in first. Tonks followed, settling between his legs with her back against his chest. She leaned into him fully, her body relaxing as the heat enveloped them both. The water lapped gently around their waists.

They stayed quiet for a long moment. Harry ran his hands slowly over her arms, then down her sides. He scooped up warm water and let it trickle over her shoulders, washing away the dried blood that still clung to her skin in thin streaks. His fingers traced the lines of her body with care, gentle over the bruises but firm where she

needed the contact. Tonks sighed deeply and pressed back against him, her head tilting to rest on his shoulder.

After a while she turned her head just enough to look up at him. Their eyes met, and Harry leaned down to kiss her softly. Her lips were warm and yielding, parting under his without any rush. But the kiss deepened quickly. Tonks made a small sound in her throat and shifted in his lap, turning the contact hotter. Harry's hands roamed lower, cupping her breasts fully now. He squeezed them gently, his thumbs brushing over her nipples until they hardened under his touch.

"Fuck, Harry," she murmured against his mouth.

He smiled into the kiss and pinched one nipple lightly, rolling it between his fingers. Tonks arched her back, pushing her tits into his hands. Their mouths moved together with growing hunger, their tongues sliding and teasing. The water sloshed around them as she rocked slightly in his lap. Harry could already feel himself getting hard, his cock pressing against the curve of her ass.

He kept one hand on her breast while the other slid down her stomach, over her mound, and between her legs. His fingers found her folds and stroked along them slowly, parting her with care. Tonks gasped and spread her thighs wider for him. She was already wet, slicker than the bathwater, and he groaned low in his chest at the feel of her lips.

"That's it," he whispered against her ear. "Let me take care of you."

He circled her clit with two fingers, applying steady pressure. Tonks moaned, the sound echoing softly off the bathroom tiles. She rocked her hips, grinding her ass back against his now fully hard cock. The friction felt incredible, hot, soapy water and her smooth skin making everything slippery and intense.

"Harry... oh shit," she breathed.

He kissed along the side of her neck, sucking lightly at the sensitive spot below her ear. Then he moved to her shoulder, nipping gently before soothing it with his tongue. His fingers kept working her clit, dipping down to slide one inside her tight heat. Tonks clenched around him immediately, her inner walls fluttering as she pushed back harder against his erection.

"Feel so good," he muttered, adding a second finger. He curled them inside her, stroking that spot that made her tremble. His thumb kept rubbing her clit in tight circles.

Tonks' moans grew louder, more desperate. She reached back with one hand, gripping his thigh for leverage as she rocked her ass along his cock.

"Yes... right there... fuck, don't stop," she panted.

Harry thrust his fingers deeper, faster, matching the rhythm of her hips. Water splashed over the edge of the tub with their movements. He kissed the nape of her neck, biting down lightly on her shoulder as he pumped his fingers in and out. Tonks cried out, her body tensing.

"I'm close already," she gasped. "Harry... I'm gonna..."

"Come for me," he urged, his voice rough. "Let it go."

He pressed harder on her clit and curled his fingers just right. Tonks shattered with a long, throaty moan. Her pussy clenched rhythmically around his fingers as she came, her hips jerking in his lap. Harry kept stroking her through it, drawing out every pulse until she slumped back against him, breathing hard.

"Good girl," he murmured, kissing her neck again.

Tonks turned her head and captured his mouth in a fierce kiss. "I need you inside me," she said against his lips. "Now."

Harry didn't waste time. He shifted her slightly, lining up his cock with her entrance. The head nudged against her slick folds, and they both groaned as he pushed in slowly. The hot water made everything feel even more intense. Inch by inch he sank into her tight heat until he was buried to the hilt inside her. Tonks let out a deep sigh of satisfaction, her walls gripping him perfectly.

"Fuck, you feel amazing," he said, his voice low.

He started to move with slow, deep thrusts that made the water ripple around them. Tonks met every stroke, rolling her hips back to take him deeper. Their bodies slid together in the heat, skin on skin, the steam making the air thick and heavy. Harry reached around to play with her breasts again, pinching her nipples as he fucked her steadily.

"Harder," she moaned. "Fuck me harder."

Harry picked up the pace, thrusting up into her with more force. The sound of water splashing mixed with their moans and the wet slap of their bodies. He kissed her neck, sucking marks into her skin while one hand dropped back between her legs to rub her clit.

"Oh god... yes... just like that," Tonks cried out. She braced her hands on the sides of the tub and pushed back against him, meeting every thrust.

Harry groaned, the tightness of her pussy driving him wild. He could feel her getting close again, her walls fluttering around his cock. He thrust harder, faster, the water churning violently now. His balls tightened as pleasure built low in his gut.

"I'm gonna come again," Tonks panted. "Come with me... please."

"Fuck, yes," he growled.

He slammed into her, rubbing her clit in fast circles. Tonks came first with a cry, her whole body shaking as she moaned his name loudly. Her pussy squeezed him like a vice, pulsing through her second orgasm. The sensation pushed Harry over the edge right after. He buried himself deep and came hard, groaning against her shoulder as he filled her with thick spurts.

They rode it out together, their hips moving in small, lazy thrusts until the pleasure faded. Harry kept his arms wrapped around her, holding her close as they both caught their breath. The water had cooled slightly but still felt soothing around them.

Tonks leaned fully back against his chest, her head on his shoulder, and she let out a long, content sigh.

"I needed that," she said softly, her voice a little hoarse.

Harry smiled and pressed a kiss to her temple. "Yeah, me too. We've earned this after everything."

They stayed like that for a while longer, tangled together in the warm water, the outside world and its battles feeling distant for now. His hands continued their gentle caresses over her skin, soothing and possessive all at once. For the first time in hours, the tension in both of them had truly begun to ease.

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A few hours had passed, and Tonks stood by the tall window of her room at Grimmauld Place, her gaze fixed on the dimly lit street outside. She had changed into a simple white top, a dark jacket that remained unzipped at the front, and black trousers that ended at her ankles and hugged her curves perfectly. Black sandals completed her attire, her nails painted red.

Her hair was pure midnight black, hanging perfectly straight down her back, and the red lipstick made her look utterly sensual. After killing Bellatrix, she had decided to completely transform her looks and had settled on this, believing it suited her.

The house creaked softly, as was usual for Grimmauld Place when people moved, but she barely noticed anything else. Her mind kept replaying the events in the cemetery, the green flash of her killing curse, and the way Bellatrix's eyes had gone empty in that final moment.

She didn't turn when the door opened behind her. She sensed Harry the moment he stepped inside, recognizing his familiar presence and the sounds he made when he was close. He paused at the door for a few seconds, watching her silhouette against the glass, before he closed the door gently, the latch clicking into place with a soft click.

His footsteps approached slowly across the worn floorboards. When he reached her, he slid his arms around her waist from behind, pulling her close, and rested his chin lightly on her shoulder. His body pressed warm and solid against her back, his breath hot against the side of her neck.

"This new looks suits you real nice," he murmured. "Dead sexy, really."

Tonks felt her lips curve up a little.

"You've been standing here a while," he said, his voice low and even. "Thinking about her?"

Tonks let out a slow breath and leaned back into him just a little. "Yeah. About Mum mostly. And about what I did today. It's been running through my head nonstop since we got back."

She kept her eyes on the street, watching a lone lamp flicker in the distance. "I spent so long imagining it, you know? Every night after they told me what happened to Mum, I pictured myself facing Bellatrix. I told myself I would make her pay for every scream she pulled out of my mother. For every insult, every curse, every twisted thing she did to my family. And now it's done. I said the words. I watched her die. And I keep waiting for this huge weight to lift off me or something."

"But it doesn't feel like that."

She shook her head mutely, releasing a soft sigh.

Harry tightened his hold around her waist, his thumbs tracing small, soothing circles over the fabric of her top. "Revenge never feels clean like people think it will. You carried that promise for a long time. It became part of who you were. Now that part is finished, and your mind is trying to figure out what comes next. That is normal, Nym. It doesn't mean you did anything wrong."

She nodded slightly, her cheek brushing against his. "I know I didn't. She deserved it. Every bit of it. The way she laughed about Mum calling my name at the end, the way she threw Sirius in my face like it was some game. She was rotten through and through. But killing her myself, looking right at her while the light left her eyes, it made me see how easy it can be to cross that line. I've spent years as an Auror trying to stop people from becoming monsters. And today I became one for a minute. Does that make me any better than her in the end?"

"You are nothing like her," Harry said firmly, his breath warm against her ear. "Bellatrix enjoyed hurting people. She got high off their pain and their fear. You didn't smile when you ended her. You did what needed doing because she would've kept hurting everyone else if you let her live. There is a difference between revenge for its own sake and justice that protects the people you care about. You protected them today. You protected your mum's memory. That is not monstrous. That is necessary."

Tonks turned slowly in his arms until she faced him, though she kept her hands resting on his chest. Their eyes met in the dim light filtering through the window.

"I feel clearer now than I have in months. Not happy exactly, but steady. Like something inside me finally lined up straight. Mum wouldn't have wanted me to spend the rest of my life chasing ghosts. She raised me to fight for what is right, not to become bitter. And I think ending Bellatrix let me close that chapter properly. I can breathe again without that constant rage sitting on my chest."

Harry lifted one hand to brush a strand of dark hair behind her ear, his touch gentle and caring. "That is what I see when I look at you right now. Strength. Not the kind that comes from pretending nothing hurts, but the kind that faces the hurt and keeps moving anyway. You've always had that fire, Nym. Losing your mum tested it. Today proved how bright it still burns. The people who follow us need to see that. They need to know we will not hesitate when the time comes to remove threats like Bellatrix from this world."

She searched his face, taking in the calm confidence in his eyes. "I used to wonder if we were going too far sometimes. All the planning, the alliances, the things we have set in motion. But watching her today, hearing her rant about purity and power while she bled out, it clicked. People like her don't just appear out of nowhere. They thrive because the system lets them. Old families turning a blind eye, ministries too scared to act, pureblood traditions that reward monsters as long as they have the right last name. They have no place in the world we are trying to build. None. I am more sure of that now than ever. Your vision for the Wizarding World, where blood doesn't decide worth and power doesn't protect the cruel, that is worth fighting for. Really fighting for. No more half measures."

Harry smiled faintly, his arms still wrapped securely around her. "That is exactly why I knew you would come through this stronger. You see the bigger picture. Most people get lost in the personal pain and stop there. But you are looking ahead. You understand that removing one threat like Bellatrix is only the start. We have to change the conditions that let her and others like her exist in the first place. It is not always pretty work. There will be hard choices and morally gray areas. But hesitation only lets more good people die. Like your mum. Like the Weasleys we lost. We honor them by making sure it stops."

Tonks let her forehead rest against his chest for a moment, absorbing his words. "I keep thinking about the moral side of it. Taking a life, even one as twisted as hers. Part of me still feels the weight of that. Auror training drilled into us that we only use lethal force as a last resort. But today was not a training exercise. She was going to keep killing. She would have come after you, after the girls, after everyone I care about. If I'd let her live, even bound and locked away, she would've found a way back. People like her always do. So I made the call. And I would make it again. That doesn't scare me anymore. It actually feels right."

"You are allowed to feel the weight," Harry replied, his voice steady and reassuring. "It shows you still have your humanity. The ones who lose that completely are the real dangers. But carrying it doesn't mean you have to let it slow you down. Use it as fuel. Channel it into making the hard decisions that protect the future. That is what separates us from them. We don't enjoy it. We do it because it has to be done."

She pulled back enough to look up at him again, her eyes shining with a new intensity. The uncertainty from earlier had burned away completely during their talk. What remained was absolute conviction, solid and unshakeable.

"I am ready to do whatever it takes, Harry. No doubts. No holding back. The Wizarding World needs cleaning up, and I am done waiting for someone else to do it. Bellatrix was just one piece. There are more out there, and they all need to go. For Mum. For everyone we have lost. And for the kids who deserve to grow up without that kind of poison hanging over them."

Harry gazed down at her, taking in the resolve written across her features. A solid smile spread across his face, warm and proud. He leaned down slowly, and their lips met in a deep, lingering kiss. It carried everything they had just shared, the understanding, the shared purpose, and the quiet comfort. When he finally pulled back, he kept his forehead pressed to hers for a second longer.

"Are you ready for the show we have got planned?" he asked quietly.

Tonks nodded without hesitation. "I am."

Harry took her hand, threading their fingers together. They walked out of the room side by side, moving down the creaky stairs of Grimmauld Place. The living room lights spilled out into the hallway as they approached. Inside, the group waited.

Daphne sat on the sofa with Tracey beside her, both looking composed and alert. Astoria stood near the fireplace, talking quietly with Evelyn. Fleur leaned against the wall, her posture elegant even now. Susan and Hannah sat close together, while Amelia stood by the window, her expression focused and professional.

Harry stopped in the doorway, still holding Tonks' hand. "Everyone ready?"

They all nodded in unison, a ripple of determination passing through the room. Amelia stepped forward. "The Auror force is already in position. Everything is set up properly. We have eyes on all the key points and backup ready if anything goes wrong."

Harry gave a single nod, his grip on Tonks' hand steady. "Then we should get going."

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The streets of Diagon Alley had been bustling with the usual midday crowd only moments before. Witches stood debating robes in the window of Madam Malkin's. A

father lifted a small child onto his shoulders outside Florean Fortescue's. Two old wizards argued cheerfully over something outside Slug and Jiggers. The smell of roasting nuts came from a cart near the entrance, and the distant clang of a hammer echoed from Quality Quidditch Supplies.

Then everything changed.

The woman near Madam Malkin's turned first because she was nearest the entrance from the Leaky Cauldron. Her hand went still on the door handle, and her shopping bag slipped an inch from her grip.

She saw it. Her mouth opened, but no sound came out.

The man beside the nut cart turned next, and for a moment his face simply did not understand what his eyes were showing him. He took one step back without meaning to, his shoulder bumping the cart and sending it rocking. He didn't notice.

A ripple of silence spread outward as people caught sight of the procession moving steadily down the center of the alley. Heads turned and conversations died mid-sentence. What they saw froze them where they stood.

Harry Potter walked down the centre of Diagon Alley.

He wore plain dark clothes, his coat unbuttoned and his hair its usual untameable self. He did not rush or look to either side. He simply led the group with a calm and purposeful stride, his wand steady.

The body of Bellatrix Lestrange floated in the air in front of him.

She drifted three feet above the cobblestones, her robes falling naturally around her, her arms loose at her sides, her dark hair spread out behind her as though she were submerged in black water. Her eyes were closed, and she looked exactly as she had in death.

No mutilation marked her form. No extra violence had touched her after the killing curse struck. She simply floated there like a macabre trophy for all to witness, just a woman now, and a dead one at that.

The father with the child on his shoulders lowered his son to the ground slowly, never looking away. A young witch in apothecary colours pressed the back of her hand to her mouth, her eyes wide. Two boys of about thirteen who had been staring at the newest Nimbus model a moment ago stood rooted to the cobblestones, the excitement gone as though it had never existed. An elderly wizard in a brown hat gripped the wall beside him with both hands and leaned against it.

Tonks walked just to his right, her black hair straight and dark against the white of her top, her jaw set. Daphne and Astoria moved behind her in silence, composed and cold-eyed. Tracey and Evelyn flanked them. Fleur walked with her spine perfectly

straight, her expression unreadable and still. Susan and Hannah flanked Amelia, who scanned the crowd with sharp, professional eyes.

Bill Weasley walked behind them. The scars on the left side of his face caught the afternoon light plainly, the evidence of what Fenrir Greyback had left him with at the Burrow. He stared straight ahead. Beside him were Fred and George, side by side, and anyone who knew them wouldn't have recognized them from the expressions on their faces. Ginny moved rigidly, her fists clenched, and her friend Luna accompanied her, her expression dreamy as usual as if this were just another interesting afternoon stroll, but every so often, her gaze would sharpen, showing the true face behind the veil of oddity.

The rest of the remaining Weasleys had stayed behind.

Gasps echoed through the alley as recognition hit properly. One older witch stepped back sharply and pressed both hands over her mouth. Her eyes widened until they seemed ready to pop. A shopkeeper near Quality Quidditch Supplies dropped the broom he had been polishing. It clattered loudly on the cobblestones, but no one looked away from the sight.

A young mother pulled her child closer and turned his face away, though her own gaze stayed locked on the floating corpse. People inside shops began to notice the sudden hush. Doors creaked open. Faces peered out from Flourish and Blotts and from the Apothecary. More wizards and witches spilled onto the street, drawn by the growing crowd and the impossible scene unfolding before them.

No one spoke above a whisper. Even the usual alley sounds of owls and cauldrons seemed to fade into the background. All eyes stayed fixed on Harry Potter and the dead body of the most feared witch in recent memory.

The procession continued without pause. Harry kept his expression steady and commanding. Bellatrix's form bobbed slightly with each step he took but never wavered from its position ahead of him.

Whispers spread like wildfire.

"Is that really her?" someone muttered.

"Bellatrix Lestrange. Merlin's beard."

By the time they reached the wide stone steps of Gringotts, the entire alley had come to a standstill. Hundreds of people were packed in the street now. Some had climbed onto benches or low rooftops for a better view.

Harry stopped at the base of the steps and turned slowly to face the crowd. With a small flick of his wand, he raised Bellatrix's body higher into the air. She hovered there for everyone to see clearly against the overcast sky. People pressed together

without knowing they were doing it. Elbows found ribs. Hands found wrists. Eyes could not look away.

They had feared her for decades. They had spoken her name in lowered voices or not at all. They had read the accounts of what she had done to the Longbottoms and felt their stomachs turn and their bowels loosen.

And here she was, floating, and she looked like nothing at all.

Harry let the silence run its course as everyone arranged themselves around him.

"Look at her," he finally called out, his tone steady yet filled with commanding power.

He didn't gesture, and he didn't need to. Every eye in the alley was already on the body floating in the air.

"Look closely. Take your time. Because I know most of you have been taught your whole lives that you mustn't. That you look away. That you speak carefully. That you keep your head down and your curtains drawn and you hope, you pray, that whatever is out there in the dark decides to pass your door by tonight."

The crowd stared, utterly shellshocked.

Harry spread his arms wide, his expression resolute.

"Bellatrix Lestrange is dead."

Someone in the crowd inhaled sharply.

"You have feared her for years, the monster who tormented families in the name of a false purity. Today, that fear ends. She will never torment another soul. She will never raise her wand in service to darkness again. She is gone. And I want you to look at her face until that becomes real to you, because it is real, and you deserve to know it."

Harry's voice rang out strong and clear, carrying to every corner of the alley. A woman near the front was crying without any sound, her hand pressed flat against her chest.

He paused, letting his words sink in. The crowd remained transfixed. Some people nodded slowly while others still looked too shocked to react. Harry continued, his voice rising.

"For years, you were told she was untouchable. For years, the fear of her name alone was enough to make grown men and women fall quiet at dinner tables, to make parents change the subject when their children asked questions, to make entire communities pretend that certain things were not happening because acknowledging them out loud might bring those things to your door."

He paused, staring at the crowd.

"That is exactly what they wanted. All of them. Every single one who calls themselves a Death Eater. Everyone who bows to Voldemort."

The crowd flinched hard. Several people cried out. A child buried her face in her father's coat. An old wizard near the back stumbled sideways into his companion as though struck.

Harry did not flinch.

"Say it again to yourself. Voldemort. Vol-de-mort. Three syllables. A name that a frightened young man chose for himself because his real name was ordinary and he wanted you afraid of him before he even walked into the room. That is the trick. That has always been the trick. The name. The robes. The mask. The spectacle. Take it away and what have you got?"

He raised his arm slowly and gestured upward at the still, pale form floating above the steps.

"A body. The same as anyone else's."

The silence that fell was something else.

"They are not invincible. They are not gods. They are weak men and women who prey on your fear because that is the only power they truly possess. Take away the fear and they crumble like dust in the wind. Today you see the proof floating before you. Bellatrix Lestrange, the most feared witch of this century, is dead. And she died the same way every person dies. Without any of the power she spent her whole life trying to make you believe she had."

His words echoed off the buildings, drawing every ear in the alley. He borrowed the fire of leaders from history and stories that had rallied broken people against overwhelming odds. Like a king addressing his realm in its darkest hour, he stood tall and unyielding.

"Think of the great stories you grew up hearing. The tales of wizards who faced dragons and giants and refused to yield. We are those wizards now. We are the ones who will write the next chapter. Look at her face. Really look. That is the end of their reign of shadows. No more hiding in your homes wondering if tonight will be the night they come for you. No more teaching your children to whisper names in fear. We can defeat them. We have defeated them. And we will keep defeating them until every last shadow is burned away by the light of our united stand!"

Harry gestured toward Bellatrix's body again. "She laughed while she killed. She mocked the pain of good people. She believed her blood made her superior and her cruelty made her strong. But in the end she fell to those she called lesser. That is the truth these Death Eaters fear most. They are bastards who have fed on your terror for

far too long. They are weaklings who only thrive when you let them. Stop giving them that power. Stand with us. Fight with us. Together we will build a world where no one has to live in fear of monsters wearing human faces!"

He let the words hang in the air for a moment, building the energy. Then he nodded toward Tonks. She stepped forward, her hair staying that midnight black despite her chaotic emotions.

"Bellatrix Lestrange murdered my mother," she said, her tone direct and unflinching. "Andromeda Tonks. Her own sister. She did it because my mother chose a Muggle-born wizard and chose love over a family name that wasn't worth the parchment it was written on. She tortured her and she laughed about it afterward, because that is what Bellatrix was. Not a warrior. Not a crusader. A torturer who enjoyed her work."

Her voice hardened.

"I killed her yesterday. I looked her in the eyes, and I made the choice. I watched the light go out of her, and I will not pretend that I feel nothing about it, because I do feel something. I feel that my mother's screaming in a room somewhere while her mad sister watched as if it was the funniest thing in the world was not justice, and what happened yesterday was. That is what I feel, and I would do it again."

The crowd murmured as Tonks stepped back and Bill Weasley moved to the front next. His scars stood out, pink and angry against his skin. He pulled up his sleeve to reveal more marks left by claws. He stood squarely and let every bit of it be seen plainly.

"Fenrir Greyback attacked our home," he said, his voice rough but steady. "He came with Bellatrix Lestrange and the rest of his pack. They killed my mother Molly Weasley, a woman who has helped many present here, who fed people she'd never met before because there was a war on and that's what decent people did. They murdered my brother Percy Weasley who had only just come back to us, who had only just found his way home."

Somewhere in the crowd, a few women were openly weeping now.

"They took Remus Lupin, a dear friend and one of the finest men I've ever known. Someone who was told he was a monster and proved everyday he wasn't. A man who only ever wanted to live in peace. And this," he gestured to the scars on his face and arm, "this is the parting gift from Fenrir Greyback. He cursed me with lycanthropy, thinking it would break me. It didn't. It made me stronger."

A wave of uneasy fear rippled through the crowd at the mention of lycanthropy. Some people stepped back slightly. Bill smiled grimly, his expression hard as granite.

"I know. I know what you're thinking. We've all been taught to fear it. To fear what it means. I'm not going to pretend it's nothing, but I'm still standing here, aren't

I? Still a Weasley, still a man, still choosing which side I'm on." He paused. "Fear it if you must, but don't let it rule you. I carry the curse and I still fight. So can you. So will all of us. For our family. For every family they have tried to destroy."

He remained silent for a moment.

"My brother Ronald is in St. Mungo's right now, where he still lies unconscious from the fight against Death Eaters at the Ministry. He's been unconscious since, and the healers don't know if he will wake up," he continued after a moment, working hard to keep his voice steady. "When he was little, he used to nick the last of the treacle tarts at Sunday dinners and blame it on Fred."

He glanced sideways at Fred who said nothing. He turned back to the crowd.

"But we stand here anyway. We will not let their terror win. Show your scars if you have them. Turn your pain into power. These monsters can be beaten."

Harry placed a supportive hand on Bill's shoulder and nodded at him with clear approval. Bill gave him a nod and stepped back.

He turned back to the crowd, his presence commanding every ounce of attention as the body of Bellatrix Lestrange floated overhead like a banner. He looked out at the sea of shaken faces.

"You heard him. You see the cost. But you also see the resolve. Voldemort," he said the name again deliberately, and several people cried out or covered their ears, "is nothing but a frightened shell hiding behind his followers. He preys on division and old hatreds. He wants you scared and scattered. But look around you. We are not scattered. We are here together. We have taken his strongest lieutenant and displayed her for the world to witness. The time for fear is over. The time for action has begun. Join us not because you must but because you choose to. Choose to protect your children. Choose to honor the dead by building something better. Choose to look at this dead witch and know that their power is an illusion. We are the future of the Wizarding World and that future will not bow to tyrants!"

His voice swelled as he continued. "This is our moment. This is our stand. Don't look away from her face. Let it burn into your memory. Let it remind you that even the darkest shadows fall when good people refuse to yield. We will march on. We will fight on. And we will win because we stand united. Who is with us?"

The women beside him stared at Harry with absolute admiration and respect. Their eyes reflected the same fire he carried. Daphne crossed her arms and lifted her chin proudly. Tracey exchanged a glance with Astoria, full of shared conviction. Fleur's hand rested near her wand, ready for whatever came next. Amelia nodded once, her experienced gaze sweeping the crowd to gauge their reaction. Susan and Hannah stood shoulder to shoulder, showing quiet solidarity. Evelyn watched everything with focused intensity.

Harry kept speaking. "You have seen what one group of determined fighters can do. Imagine what all of us can achieve together. The Death Eaters rely on your silence. Break it. Speak out. Stand up. Teach your neighbors to do the same. We don't need to live in the shadow of a noseless tyrant and his band of cowards. We are stronger than they ever imagined. Look at Bellatrix Lestrange one last time. She thought she was eternal. She thought her cruelty would protect her. It didn't. It led her here to this public end. That is the fate awaiting every one of them who continues down their path. But for you there is another way. A better way. A free way. Choose it with me today!"

Somewhere in the crowd, someone began to clap. Then another. Then a third, and a fourth, and then something cracked open in the body of the crowd all at once, and a thunderous applause rose up, the crowd whistling and clapping as they cried out in unity.

Harry simply stared ahead, his lips quirked into the barest hint of a smirk. The procession had done its work. Bellatrix's body still hovered high serving as a stark symbol for all to remember. And they will remember. He was sure of it.