

Harry in the Hellmouth

Chapter 26

The atmosphere was tense, and even Oz, who was usually very even-keeled, was more than a little nervous. He was crouched down behind the short wall on the roof of Sunnydale High, sitting next to Harry. Harry had his head above the edge, scoping out the oncoming threat. "There's a lot. Maybe two or three hundred," Harry told him as he watched the vampire horde slowly making their way to the school.

"Two or three hundred," he breathlessly whispered as though he couldn't believe those numbers. He poked his head up and quickly dropped back down, his eyes wide with disbelief. "Shit," he muttered under his breath.

On the roof with them were eight other students. Harry chose those who probably wouldn't have been good at physical combat. They were a mixture of the small, meek, and sickly. One girl whimpered while sitting close by with her arms wrapped around her knees. Harry smiled calmly at her and rubbed her shoulder. "It'll be okay. I promise," he assured her. She took a deep breath and nodded.

"Should we start?" a guy with crutches asked, and Harry shook his head.

"Wait for the signal," Harry told him.

In the courtyard in the center of the school, the graduation ceremony was underway, which was being broadcast to them by a walkie-talkie under Xander's control. Waiting was the worst part ... if you didn't count the absurdly long speech that the mayor was giving. Harry then heard the mayor's speech falter, and it sounded as though he was struggling to talk. He then began grunting in pain, and Harry knew it was time.

"Get ready," he quietly told his small band of combatants. He looked over all of them, and each one was trembling badly. Suddenly, there was a loud scream, which turned into a deafening roar. Then, the long neck and head of a serpentine creature rose up, reaching the same height as the roof.

"NOW!" he heard Buffy call out through the walkie-talkie, and Harry jumped to his feet.

"Let's go!" Harry yelled out as flames and arrows began flying at the creature's head, distracting it from what was happening on the roof. As scared as they were, everyone around him jumped up and joined him at the roof's edge. Harry started several magical fires along the edge and picked up one of the many gas-filled bottles lining the roof. He lit the rag and took aim. Harry chucked the bottle over the edge and watched as the flaming bottle arched through the air and hit the ground right between three vampires. The bottle burst, and all three were instantly engulfed in flames. They screeched loudly and thrashed around as their clothes were set alight.

Beside him, Oz chucked the next bottle, and then the person next to him threw another. Within seconds, bottle after bottle smashed against the ground, setting dozens of vampires on fire.

Harry twirled the Elder Wand in his fingers and swirled it around and around. A small ball of fire appeared, hovering over the tip. With every swirl of his wand, the ball of fire pulsed and doubled in size. Once it reached the size of a basketball, Harry pointed his wand at the crowd below and fired. The ball shot from his wand and hit the ground with such explosive force that it ripped massive chunks of concrete from the ground. The twenty or so vampires unlucky enough to get caught up in the blast were instantly vaporized. Meanwhile, more and more flaming bottles arched through the air, some hitting their intended targets, some not so much. The beast below roared in rage, though Harry couldn't see what was happening. "We're almost out!" Oz loudly informed him as he threw another bottle.

"Throw whatever's left and get over here!" Harry loudly ordered his small group. It took another minute before all the bottles were gone. They quickly huddled around him. "I've already explained what this is, so grab on," Harry told them, holding up a large, plastic hula-hoop. Everyone except Oz grabbed the toy and held on tightly.

"Thank you all for helping out. I'm proud of you," Harry smiled at them, and the girl closest to him blushed heavily. The rest looked pleased with their efforts. With that, Harry set off the portkey and transported them to safety. They needed to get off the roof as quickly as possible. "You ready?" he asked Oz, and he nodded, tightly clutching his handheld weapons. Harry grabbed his shoulder and apparated them down to the ground below.

Oz stumbled when they reappeared, and Harry grabbed him by his bicep to keep him on his feet. All around was carnage and destruction. Dozens of fires were burning, which were throwing the vampires into a bit of a panicked frenzy. Students then rushed out of the building with stakes, axes, machetes, and anything else they could get their hands on, and rushed the oncoming horde. Oz charged in with his spear, and Harry could only hope he would be okay.

As a vampire ran by, Harry flicked his wand and sent several arrows at him. One missed while the other two hit him in the arm and the side of his head. His legs stopped working mid-stride, and he limply flopped to the ground, where he exploded in a burst of dust. Two vampires spotted him and charged while baring their sharp fangs. "Come get some, ugly!" Harry taunted them, which seemed to anger them more. Their disgusting, deformed faces quickly turned from anger to surprise when Harry swished his wand and sent them rocketing backward. They slammed into the ground and skidded across it before rolling right into a fuel fire. Their high-pitched squeals of agony were music to his ears.

Harry jerked his wand, and a flamethrower-like torrent of fire erupted from the tip, setting several more alight and sending several others running scared. Off in the distance, Harry spotted Angel punching and kicking his way through a small group of vampires. He looked like he had things under control. Harry's momentary lack of concentration nearly cost him. A vampire grabbed him from behind and wrapped his arms around him, pinning Harry's arms to his sides. Harry

thrashed around, but the vampire was incredibly strong. As it leaned in to take a bite out of his neck, Harry pointed his wand at the vampire's foot and shot off a powerful Blasting Curse. The concussive blast sent Harry tumbling to the ground, but he quickly rolled to his feet. When he spotted the vampire ten feet away, it was screaming and holding a stump where its leg used to be. A Piercing Hex punched a hole right through the side of its head, and it turned to dust. Harry then heard a female scream, and Xander yelling, "Willow!"

Harry spotted the redhead in a similar position to the one he was just in. A vampire had her from behind as she thrashed around trying to break free. Harry pointed his wand and summoned the vampire to him. Even as it soared through the air, the vampire refused to let go of his favorite redhead. His options were limited since he didn't want to hurt Willow, so the moment their feet touched the ground, Harry used the power of the Elder Wand and summoned the vampire's chin to him from behind. His head twisted around with a sickening pop, and suddenly, he was staring at Harry even though his body was facing the opposite direction. His arms and legs went limp, and his body dropped to the ground. Willow jumped away and turned around. Her face grew a bit pale when she saw how badly his neck had been snapped. The vampire cried out pitifully, which caused Willow to jump in fright. She ran around the body and joined Harry's side just before he incinerated it with a flick of his wand.

"Harry ..." she choked out, trying to catch her breath. "Thank goodness," she said, tightly wrapping her arms around his waist. Harry chuckled and fired off a cutter, which flew through the air and sliced a vampire apart at the waist.

"Maybe you should stick by my side," Harry suggested, and Willow readily agreed. Her neck was already beginning to bruise from the fierce grip the vampire had on her. Another ground-shaking roar came from inside the school, and Harry heard loud booming sounds like the beast was crashing through walls. "Umm ... I think maybe we should run," Harry told Willow, who was still clutching him tightly. It seemed that Buffy's part of the plan was well underway.

"I think that's a good idea," Willow agreed, and they took off running right before a massive explosion knocked them off their feet. Harry hit the grass hard and rolled several feet before coming to a stop. He turned his head and saw large chunks of Sunnydale High raining down all around them. A huge fireball blew out the front doors, and a large section of the roof collapsed. A few seconds later, the entire building was burning. A few feet away, Willow groaned. Harry crawled over to her and checked her for injuries.

"Are you okay?" he asked. She had a few scrapes on her hands and cheeks, but other than that, she appeared unhurt.

"My ankle," she winced. "I twisted it." Harry lifted her leg and asked her to wiggle her foot.

"It's not broken," he said as she moved her foot in a circular pattern. Harry pointed his wand at her ankle and healed it to the best of his ability. Willow sighed, and Harry helped her to her feet. She tried to put some weight on it.

"I think it's okay," she said with a soft smile.

The few vampires that were left knew they were fighting a losing battle and did what they do best. They tucked tails and ran the moment things got dicey. Harry shot a few fireballs at their retreating backs, but only managed to hit a few before the rest sank into the shadows.

"Buffy?" Willow asked as she stared at the collapsing school, highly concerned for her best friend.

"C'mon ... Let's go find her," Harry told her. He knew Buffy would be okay. She was a tough girl who could take care of herself.

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"Ow! Ow! Owie!" Buffy hissed as Harry dabbed her cut cheek with an alcohol soaked cotton ball.

"That's what you get for diving headfirst through a closed window," Harry amusedly stated as he cleaned her wounds. "Why didn't you open it when you were packing the library with explosives?" he asked the logical question.

"That was Giles' job," Buffy said, staring the librarian down with an unimpressed look. Giles squirmed in place and fiddled with his glasses.

"Yes, well, I ..." he momentarily paused to think up a plausible lie. When he couldn't think of one, he decided to stall. "I was planning to, but I ... well ..."

"He forgot when he started pilfering books from the library," Xander chuckled. "That magical bag you gave him really came in handy. I don't think there was a book left in the whole school."

Buffy huffed in annoyance while Giles looked on sheepishly. "Those books have been and will continue to be very useful to us," Giles defended himself. Harry supposed that was true enough.

"Look on the bright side, Buffy," Harry smiled at the pretty Slayer. "We won, none of us were hurt too badly, and your school days are officially over."

"I like the sound of that," she replied, smiling happily.

"And Snyder was eaten by the mayor ... so double victory," Xander cheered.

"Xander!" Willow chastised him and smacked his arm. She then yawned loudly.

"It's getting late," Giles said, standing up. They were all in Harry's warehouse after taking a portkey from the battlefield. Giles had his car parked out front. "I'll drive you all home, and then

I'll be getting a good night's sleep before joining the unemployment line in the morning," he sighed. Harry chuckled.

"Why don't you work here? The pay is really good, and I'm sure Anya could use some help with all the sorting and researching," Harry suggested. He was making a lot of money, and the work was beginning to pile up. Besides, he wanted to do less categorizing and more of the fun, dangerous stuff.

"Yes, well ... I suppose that's a thought," Giles said in the most Giles way possible. Still, Harry could see the slight smile on his tired face. There was little doubt in Harry's mind that Giles would accept his offer. "Anyway, come along. I'll get you all home safe," he said. Xander and Willow stood up and followed him to the exit.

"Are you coming, Buff?" Xander asked when Buffy remained seated. She shook her head.

"Harry will get me home safely," she said with a smile. Xander saluted her and walked out of the warehouse. Buffy then got up and sat down in Harry's lap. He wrapped his arms around her waist while she wrapped hers around his neck. She leaned in and kissed him sweetly.

"Thanks for backing me up today," she said, laying soft kisses along his jaw.

"Anytime," Harry replied before she kissed him more passionately than she ever had.