

Chapter 2

“Did you really feel this was necessary?” Dumbledore asked as they rode the elevator up to the Minister’s 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.

"Saul Croaker," Dumbledore replied.

Harry nodded, the name seeming familiar.

"Well, unfortunately, it looks like we're not going to be able to get any more done today," Bones sighed. "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!?”

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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 a 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.”

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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.