

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Harry steps in.

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Harry winces as he watches Tracey make another minor error. He grimaces as she and Daphne go over the newest section of the ritual with what they no doubt believe to be scrutinizing gazes... and miss said error anyways. As they get closer and closer to being ready to actually perform the ritual... Harry simply can't stay quiet anymore.

"Enough."

He reveals himself in a moment where neither of them are working, just to be safe. Both are standing up and reaching for more of the magical blood he'd procured for them. As such, they whip around in unison, wands drawn at an impressive speed, pointing them at him even as their eyes widen in shock.

"Wha- Hallows?! What in Merlin's name are you doing here?!"

Tracey's shock is vocal... Daphne's is quieter. The Lady Greengrass stands there silently with narrowed eyes, assessing his presence and what it means to her plans while her subordinate does the talking. Harry just arches a brow at Tracey.

"I gave you over a hundred gallons of magical blood. Did you really think I wouldn't follow up and find out what you were intending on using it for?"

Flushing a bit, Tracey grits her teeth, the knuckles of her wand hand turning white.

"But I checked the blood for trackers! You shouldn't have had any way of finding this place!"

Harry doesn't necessarily want to be condescending... so he just smiles at Tracey instead. Which to be fair, probably still feels rather condescending... but hey, it's got to be better than him spelling it out for her, right?

Tracey falters, her face growing redder still in the bright moonlight. In the ensuing silence, Daphne finally speaks up.

"What exactly do you mean by 'Enough'? Your curiosity is undesirable but ultimately understandable, Lord Hallows. However, if you seek to *stop* us..."

Harry resists the urge to roll his eyes at that, instead looking around at the massive blood ritual they've been building.

"Stop you? Perhaps... but only from making a mistake that will cost all three of you your lives."

Tracey bristles.

"You can't be serious! Just because the Ministry outlaws blood magic doesn't mean-!"

But Daphne cuts her servant off with a raised hand, causing Tracey to immediately go silent. Staring him down, the Lady of House Greengrass frowns.

"If we do not perform this blood ritual successfully, my sister will die regardless, Lord Hallows. No matter how dangerous it is, both Tracey and I are willing to risk our lives for a chance at restoring Astoria's health. And it is only our lives we're risking, so I see no reason that you should feel the need to step in."

Harry looks to Daphne's sleeping sister in the center of the ritual and slowly nods.

"Under normal circumstances, I'd agree with you. Specifically, if I did think you had a chance. However, as things currently stand... you're facing certain death."

Before either Daphne or Tracey can respond to that, Harry pulls his own wand and flicks it... not towards them, but the ritual around them. The two witches react admirably, firing off spells instantly from their own drawn wands... that splash ineffectually against a magical shield Harry had raised wandlessly the moment that they drew on him in the first place.

Daphne then whips her head around in a panic, clearly wondering what he's just done to the ritual... only to pause. Both of them pause, in fact, Tracey still staring at him but not casting anymore now that she's seen he's shielded. The two witches are tense as can be now, even as Daphne's brow furrows in confusion.

"What... what have you done?"

All around them, at different parts of the ritual circle, sections have started to glow. Almost two dozen of them by this point, in fact. With a sigh, Harry gestures with his free hand.

"I've highlighted your errors."

Both women blink at that. Tracey stiffens and scowls while Daphne... Daphne takes a step over to the closest glowing section of the ritual and peers down at it. After a moment, she curses under her breath. This prompts Tracey to look over to her mistress, her wand wavering a bit.

"He... he's not right, is he?"

Instead of answering immediately, Daphne goes to check a second glowing section. And then a third followed by a fourth. After the fifth and sixth, she finally stops, her shoulders slumped as she turns back to them. For a moment, the Lady Greengrass' eyes drift shut and a look of pure and utter defeat spreads across her face.

"Daph..."

Tracey gives away just how close their relationship is in that moment, sounding almost as broken as Daphne looks. Neither woman is at all happy... and it's all Harry's fault, so he clears his throat to draw their attention back to him.

"Would you like my assistance?"

A jolt goes through the two witches, Daphne's eyes snapping open and zeroing in on him. They both stare at him for a long moment before she hesitantly ventures forth.

"... At what cost, exactly?"

Harry grins crookedly and nods his head towards Tracey.

"You know my rates."

The relief that fills the air is altogether palpable, even if it's also tinged with a little bit of incredulity. After all, they knew by this point that he was as rich as he was powerful. The whole 'Private Eye' business was clearly just a fun little pastime for him as far as they were concerned.

Collecting a bunch of magical blood in exchange for gold... that was one thing. But providing his services and helping them perform the largest blood ritual Magical Britain was likely to have seen in the past few hundred years... that was something else entirely. And yet, he was still asking for just gold and nothing else...

"We would... love to hire you, Mister Hallows."

Harry grins and moves forward, even as Tracey drops her wand. What follows is... well, maintenance of a sort. As he works, Daphne and Tracey follow after him, watching over his shoulders.

"It's not either of your fault, to be clear. This sort of ritual would usually have a dozen witches and wizards working on it together, all checking each other's work. The two of you simply took on too large of a workload for yourselves."

Tracey makes a noise in the back of her throat that might have been understanding. Daphne, meanwhile, huffs with her arms crossed over her chest.

“If it would usually take a dozen people, how are you alone going to catch every single error?”

Harry grins and waves his wand again, refreshing the glowing patterns across the ritual.

“I’m cheating, obviously.”

Tracey pipes up then.

“But wait, if you have some sort of spell that highlights the parts of the ritual that are incorrect... wouldn’t you have had to seen this ritual before to know what the correct version looks like?”

Harry graces Tracey with a proud look.

“Clever girl.”

Tracey flushes, looking torn between pride at the praise and offense at being so demeaned. In the end, she settles on pride... or at least doesn’t voice her offense.

“... Yes, I’ve seen this ritual performed before.”

“Where? On who?”

Daphne’s questions are sharp... but not in a hostile manner. She’s just... aggressively curious. Alas, Harry doubts she would remain so if he told her the truth, so in the end he just gives her a mysterious smile and a shake of his head.

“I have to have some secrets, Lady Greengrass.”

Fortunately, that works in terms of getting her to drop it with little more than a small huff. Which is good because Harry doesn't necessarily want to explain that the last time he saw this ritual was in another world. It was orchestrated by one Draco Malfoy in a desperate bid to save his ailing wife. It had been performed perfectly of course, and Harry remembered every line of that ritual circle.

The problem came with the final components of the ritual... and the path Draco ultimately took in that regard. Harry is glad to see that Daphne and Tracey have not taken a similar path... though even as he fixes the last of their mistakes and the full ritual circle comes to fruition, he gives them both a look.

"I imagine you're intending to use yourselves for the fuel? Do you truly believe you have enough power for that?"

Again, the two witches stiffen up, with Daphne narrowing her eyes at him.

"Hm. You really have performed this ritual before, haven't you?"

Harry just tilts his head to the side and keeps smiling, neither confirming nor denying it. In the end, Daphne huffs.

"Yes, we intend to support Astoria with our magic while the blood curse is being purged. What of it?"

Well...

"You aren't powerful enough. Not even together."

His blunt appraisal causes Daphne to bristle, while Tracey glances nervously between him and her mistress.

That's the kicker, at the end of the day. It's not enough to do the ritual perfectly at exactly the right time with precisely the right ingredients. You also need the one component that not everyone can reliably source... power. And you needed a lot of it, too.

That was where Draco had erred in that previous timeline. He'd gone a little mad with his wife's failing health on the line and in order to power the magical ritual, he'd turned every single wizard and witch who had helped him create it into a fuel source. It was their magic that he'd bound into the ritual without their consent, effectively using them as magical batteries.

In order to save their lives, Harry had been forced to destroy the ritual after arriving too late to stop it from starting in the first place. He'd broken the connections to save Draco's victims... and in doing so, he'd killed Astoria on the spot.

Now, there was something to be said for consent. A consensual wizard or witch offering their magic for such a ritual was always going to be able to give more power than someone who was forcibly drained. It was a huge difference.

However, the risk was such that getting people to willingly sign up for such a thing was a very tall order. Daphne and Tracey might both have been willing, but the two of them alone would not have survived this ritual, even with consent. Not just because they didn't have enough power, but also because two was an... inauspicious number.

Three on the other hand... well, that was something else.

"Luckily for you, ladies... you have me."

Again, his words shock both Tracey and Daphne. The former's jaw drops open while the latter's eyes widen in disbelief.

"Wha- you're willing to do that? Seriously?!"

"... You would risk your life for my sister? Why?"

Well, the truth is Harry knows he's not risking his life. Not truly. Master of Death and all that. And of course, secondary to all of that...

“I’m more than powerful enough to handle it. With me helping, there is no risk involved.”

His confidence is met with simmering incredulity from both witches... but Daphne has come too far to back down now. She would have tried to perform the ritual even without him after all, so she’s not about to turn down his assistance.

That’s good because having the three of them at triangle points of the circle is much better, magically speaking, then having just two on opposite sides of the circle. Once they’re all in place, standing amidst freshly dried magical blood... they begin.

Power almost immediately thrums in the air as Harry lets his magic flow out of him and into the ritual at his feet. Daphne and Tracey both do the same... but as the dried blood starts to glow outwards from the three of them, his glow spreads much faster than theirs. It meets theirs more than three-quarters of the way to them both and fills in the part of the circle between the two of them for good measure.

Harry isn’t doing this just to show off. If the worst comes to pass, then he’s made it so he can disconnect Daphne and Tracey from the circle with barely a thought, saving their lives if nothing else. However, he’s confident that Daphne would never forgive him for doing so. Especially as the magic finally reaches Astoria’s unconscious form, causing it to seize up and rise into the air, her spine arching as power begins to flow through her.

The blood curse that the Greengrass Family suffers under is a particularly nasty little thing. It’s careful and cautious, only showing up every so often in order to keep the Magical Noble House from ever truly focusing on solving it. It’s just ‘one of those things’ they’ve come to terms with, one of their members being sickly and dying young every few generations or so.

But this Daphne Greengrass clearly loves her sister very much and refuses to let Astoria go quietly into that good night. And for that... Harry decides he’s going to do everything he can to help her.

Power swells, the ritual's glow growing. And Harry... Harry delves in to find the blood curse tied to Astoria Greengrass and eradicate it once and for all.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!