

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

A/N: Daphne and Tracey get front row seats!

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Lord Harry Hallows. He was nothing but a passing curiosity to Daphne at first. It wasn't as though he were the first wizard from outside of the isles to show up and try to claim his birthright, after all. There were plenty of wizards over on the mainland who technically held a blood claim to a noble house in Magical Britain, affording them access to a Gringotts Vault and even a Wizengamot Seat.

However, every single one who had tried to come over and 'best the curse' had died. Without fail. And usually within days of their arrival.

In that regard, when Daphne first heard of Lord Hallows, she expected him to meet the exact same fate. While the rumors of him combining the Potter and Black Vaults at Gringotts were certainly interesting, they were ultimately meaningless to Daphne in the grand scheme of things. After all, she had her sister to worry about.

Daphne and Astoria hadn't always gotten along all that well. It was just the way of things between siblings, especially sisters. But when they lost their father and then their mother took her own life... well, some things have a way of drawing people together, don't they?

And then Astoria got sicker and sicker and it became obvious that the once-a-century blood curse that plagued their family had chosen it's next victim. Daphne had immediately begun to research the issue, but none of the ancient texts and journals in their family library had been of much help.

Oh, they'd outlined all of the things they'd tried to do that had failed, but ultimately it all boiled down to 'well, we tried, it's impossible'. It didn't help that House Greengrass had a huge aversion to blood magic in general, a culture that

ran so deep that they were barely even willing to look to the source of their woes for a solution.

Daphne refused to let that lie though. She refused to just accept that Astoria's only choice was to lay down and die. And so she'd done what almost nobody else in her family had dared to try to do... she'd delved into the very blood magic that they all so deeply abhorred.

It wasn't like there was anybody to stop her. Even the Ministry of Magic, which might have done so, was too hobbled and crippled by the wizard deaths to be paying enough attention.

On the contrary, Daphne had gained support from her best friend, retainer, and bedmate, Tracey. She'd been more than willing to act as Daphne's go-between, a layer of insulation in case someone from the Ministry did catch on to what they were doing. Of course, Daphne would never have let Tracey take the fall for her permanently. She would have used her position in the Wizengamot to get the half-blood witch off of whatever charges the Ministry tried to bring against her.

Regardless, this was where Harry Hallows had gone from a mere curiosity to something useful. When he'd suddenly made that strange new business of his, Daphne had seen an opportunity. Sure, she hadn't fully understood what a 'Private Investigator' was supposed to be, but she was more than willing to test his limits by having Tracey give him a procurement job of sorts.

Lo and behold, Hallows had quickly retrieved the primer on blood magic that Tracey had tasked him with finding. It likely wasn't too difficult for him, he probably had one in one of his family libraries. But more importantly, it proved that he wasn't going to go running to the Ministry at the first whiff of anything illegal. It proved that he could be useful.

And so Daphne had Tracey set Harry Hallows on getting all of the magical blood they needed for this night's ritual. It was a ritual that Daphne had discovered after years of searching, a ritual that should free not just Astoria but their entire bloodline from the blood curse so long as it worked.

For weeks now, Hallows had been delivering magical blood and both Tracey and Daphne had been going over it carefully before bringing it to this location, the ritual site. They'd never found anything amiss with the blood... it was always exactly what it was supposed to be. However, they'd also never located a single tracker... and yet, Hallows had tracked them down to this place all the same.

Unfortunately, Daphne had no choice but to trust him at this point. The mistakes he'd pointed out in the ritual circle were legitimate... she, Tracey, and Astoria would have all died before they could even get things off the ground if they'd gone forward without his fixes.

More than that, he was clearly more than a match for the two of them in a fight as well, making removing him from the premises by force a difficult proposition to say the least.

And finally, there was what he'd revealed. That not only had he seen this ritual done before, but that Daphne and Tracey didn't have the magical power necessary to pull it off.

That bit rankled, Daphne couldn't lie. She was plenty powerful as a witch and Tracey didn't do too badly for herself either. Magic had always come fairly easy to both of them, with them each scoring well back at Hogwarts. Obviously Daphne was well aware that this ritual usually required sacrifices and what not, but the amount of power that one could extract from a willing participant was much larger compared to unwilling participants. So it should have been fine... or so she'd believed.

It's only now, as the ritual begins to progress and Daphne feels the pull on her magic, that she starts to realize how wrong she was. The entire ritual circle is infused with power at this point, but the lion's share of that power comes from Harry.

She knows this because she can feel her 'part' in the ritual and she can also feel Harry's part of it... but she can't feel Tracey's. Rather, Harry's magic had filled the ritual so swiftly and with such volume that it had filled in the gap between her and Tracey's magic before they could reach one another.

If she concentrates, she can feel Tracey still... but only through Harry. The same for being able to feel Astoria. Harry has effectively taken the lion's share of the ritual's burden and in doing so he's also taken control.

This... doesn't make Daphne happy. Not that she feels she has to be the one to save her sister or anything, but rather putting her sister's fate in Hallows' hands doesn't sit well with her. He could do anything right now and there's absolutely nothing she or Tracey could do to stop him. Not without disrupting the ritual and Daphne is well aware that doing so at this point would likely kill Astoria outright.

They're trapped and at his mercy basically. He can do whatever he wants with them and there's-

Cease your catastrophizing, Lady Greengrass. Here, watch.

Daphne jolts as Harry Hallows' 'voice' suddenly fills her mind. She twitches, even as he gives her a nudge with his magic, directing her to focus on what he's trying to show her. She feels Tracey's attention join hers as they both peer at Astoria... following Harry forward into center of the ritual... to the blood curse itself.

Daphne's eyes widen as Harry effectively shows her and Tracey everything he's doing. He doesn't do it alone either, welcoming their power, inviting them to assist him in their own small ways. But they remain small ways... he's still doing the lion's share of the work.

And yet, she can see it all now. As both onlooker and collaborator, Daphne watches and participates as Harry uses the powerful ritual they've enacted to begin unwinding the blood curse from her sister. It starts with Astoria... but goes further than that as well, pushing metaphysically deeper until, much to Daphne's surprise, he also begins to unwind the blood curse from *her* too.

It makes sense... the blood curse is tied to their bloodline in general, not just Astoria. It lies dormant in Daphne, all but inviting Daphne to live a full life and have a family, knowing it will be passed on to her children and their children and

their children's children, until eventually it can rear its ugly head again and rob yet another Greengrass of their life.

Still, it feels strange to have Harry Hallows working through her like that. The powerful magic he wields interfaces with her directly and takes her breath away. She'd known she was strong... stronger than her and Tracey combined by quite a lot, in fact. But only now does she realize just how deep that well of power reaches... and that they're actually in quite good hands.

He has every opportunity to take advantage of this situation. Harry could extract any concessions he wanted from them in this moment. Hell, he might not even have to bother with concessions. He could bind them to him, could take control, could do whatever he liked with them.

The Wizard Lord does none of those things. Instead, he does exactly what he said he would. He unravels the blood curse, pulling every last bit of it out of Daphne and her sister and their bloodline. It takes a long time... long enough to give Daphne plenty of time to think about what happens next, especially when she finally comes to terms with the fact that it's working.

Astoria is going to live. Their family is no longer going to suffer under this damn curse. And in the end, there's only one person responsible for that... Harry Hallows.

As the ritual comes to a close, Harry even going out of his way to unwind their magic and carefully disconnect them all from the powerful casting so they don't have to risk doing it themselves, Daphne gasps, suddenly returned to her physical form.

Truthfully, she hadn't even realized she was having an out of body experience until she was back IN her body, dropping to her knees and heaving for every breath as her heart races in her chest. She's not tired or spent or anything like that... but only because she'd been connected to such a vast well of magical power that her own magic had barely been needed to fuel the ritual.

Still, it takes her a bit to catch herself. Tracey too, the other witch also collapsing to her knees and needing some time to recover. Meanwhile... a shadow eventually falls over Daphne and when she looks up, its to see Harry Hallows standing before her, holding Astoria's comatose form in his arms.

Is this the moment where he turns on them? Is this the moment where he makes his demands? No... Daphne doesn't actually believe that. He would have acted long before now if he had ill intentions or malicious designs upon any of them. It's just difficult for her to truly trust anyone after everything these past several years.

Still, Harry lowers himself down to one knee and offers Daphne her sister's slumbering form. Astoria looks small in his arms... but also healthier than she has in a long time. The color is already returning to her face, the sickness that's plagued her washing away by the second.

As Tracey scrambles over to Daphne's side, Daphne takes Astoria from Harry's arms, holding her sister in her lap and brushing some hair out of the younger witch's face. They'd done it. They'd actually done it.

Tearing her eyes off of Astoria, Daphne forces herself to look to Harry. In this moment, there's no choice... she knows what she must do. She has to-

"No."

Wait what?

Daphne blinks as before she can swear the life debt, Harry raises a hand and cuts her off.

"I know that look. You are definitely not swearing any sort of oath or life debt to me. Neither of you."

His eyes flick over to Tracey at those last three words, prompting the half-blood witch to twitch. Perhaps Tracey thought she could take on this burden for

Daphne as they'd intended for her to take on other burdens... but no. That would never work.

"You are owed something, Lord Hallows. If not a life debt, then what?"

But Harry just shakes his head.

"I am owed nothing beyond my fee. You're paying me for services rendered, remember? You hired me to make sure this ritual went off without a hitch... and it did."

Daphne's jaw drops open. Gold? All he was asking for was some measly gold? It was absolutely ludicrous, especially when she was confident that he had enough wealth to buy and sell her family five times over. The Potters and Blacks had been around longer than the Greengrasses, after all.

He was unfathomably rich... he had to be. And yet here he was, helping them for a comparable pittance and demanding nothing more in return. It was ridiculous. And yet... she could tell he was being genuine, no matter how incredulous it left her feeling.

That said, she really wasn't going to leave it at just that. She would do the bare minimum if he wouldn't allow her to do anything else.

"... You will forever have a friend in House Greengrass, Lord Hallows. For as long as our houses exist, Greengrass will never forget the kindness done for us this day."

Even this has Harry wincing a little bit... but he nods his head all the same.

"Understood. House Hallows accepts this honor and names House Greengrass our boon friend in return."

Heh, he at least knew the proper words, Daphne supposed. That said, looking down into her sister's sleeping face, Daphne considers waking her up from the

magical coma she's in for a moment so she can say thank you to her savior properly.

... But for some reason, she hesitates. Instead of waking Astoria, Daphne toys with a different idea... namely, inviting Harry Hallows back to Greengrass Manor. Astoria would do good to sleep until morning. And in the meantime... well...

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