

Magically Marvelous

Chapter 7

“Thirty seconds!”

Harry stood up just as the military plane that he was flying on jerked violently from the updrafts produced from the wind hitting the surrounding mountains. The few military crew members present on the flight had no idea who he truly was. Harry was more than happy to keep it that way.

Feeling someone tugging on his back, he turned his head and saw the only other crewman in the back of the plane checking that his chute was strapped on properly. He gave Harry a thumbs up. “Ready?” he called out. Harry nodded and grabbed the goggles which were resting on the front of his helmet and pulled them down until they covered his eyes.

“Let’s do this,” Harry called back. The man nodded and hit a button on the side of the fuselage. A red light began flashing and a loud alarm blared as the back of the plane opened up. Instantly, the inside of the plane was buffeted by a fierce, cold wind.

“GO!” he heard the man yell as he slapped Harry on the back. Harry ran and jumped out of the plane. Spinning around so that he was facing upward, he watched as the back end closed while the plane flew away. Spinning back around, he took the opportunity to observe the surrounding area from high above. It was very early in the morning in that part of the world. Thankfully, the heat hadn’t become unbearable just yet. The Special Force crew that had given him a ride must have thought that he was insane to jump out alone in this part of Afghanistan. Kunar was a mountainous region of the country that bordered Pakistan. As such, it was a haven for several terrorist organizations, not to mention opium labs and other criminals in general. The crew, however, knew very well to never ask questions.

From high above, he couldn’t see any living thing for miles around, which wasn’t a surprise. The area was very inhospitable. As he got closer to the ground, he pulled his chute and slowed down. Doing a few lazy circles, he surveyed his landing zone and found a nice patch of dirt with very few rocks. Coming in slow, his feet hit the ground, and he ran forward as the momentum carried him. As he stopped, he undid his backpack and piled it up with the parachute, goggles, and helmet that he had also been wearing. With a wave of his hand, it all completely vanished. After erasing the evidence of his drop, he pulled out the GPS that had been provided to him. According to it, he was around twenty miles east of his point of interest. Pulling out a special sack that he had made for just such an occasion, he opened the mouth of the bag and stretched it to an absurd degree. He held one end of the sack open by trapping it between his foot and the ground. He then reached in and pulled hard. A wheel popped out of the opening. “HA!” he cheered and was able to let the bag go. It snapped closed around the wheel. He then worked the bag the rest of the way until he had his motorcycle completely free. Looking at the bag, she shook his head. It was ripped in several different places.

“Completely fucked,” he said and vanished it as well. Unfortunately, his bike couldn’t be shrunk down, but it could be placed in a bag with an Undetectable Extension Charm on it. The bag he made for the occasion was similar to Hermione’s old bag. It was better than a normal expanded bag because it could stretch to fit almost any reasonably-sized shape, but it was a headache to make and keep functioning properly. He remembered Hermione always tinkering with her bag to make sure it didn’t rip open, causing everything to spill out. Harry just used as little effort as possible to make a one-off bag ... use it once and toss it away. In the end, it did its job.

Mounting his bike, he kickstarted it and smiled as it roared to life. Pressing a button on the console, he turned on the invisibility mode and stepped on the gas. He cried out happily as the air whipped through his messy hair. Memories flashed through his mind of his days back at Hogwarts, the crowds cheering and booing as he battled for the evading Snitch. Twisting the throttle back, his surroundings began to blur as he kicked his bike into gear. Immediately the front tire began to lift off of the ground. Within seconds, he was soaring a hundred feet above the ground. Turning in the direction that he was supposed to be going, he put on a burst of speed and made it there in record time. Seeing the road, he looked a little further down and saw what he was looking for. Hitting the clutch, the bike began to lower and slow down until his wheels touched down on the compacted dirt road. He pulled up to the spot where there was clear evidence of an explosion. Turning off his bike, he lowered the kickstand and got off. Taking a quick look around, he saw hundreds of small pieces of what was once a military Humvee.

Harry had read the dossier that Fury had prepared for him and knew of the ambush. The military had removed the destroyed vehicles for whatever reason, but there was still plenty of evidence to uncover. He spent the better part of fifteen minutes looking around until he spotted an area soaked with dried blood a short distance away from the road. “The soldiers would probably stay closer to their vehicles for cover,” Harry reasoned to himself. During an ambush, no one in their right mind would leave cover and stand out in the open. He walked around the area before kneeling next to a small crater. From the light smears of blood, he guessed that someone was launched away from the explosion, hit the ground, and slid. The smears of blood would have been more prominent if they had been injured and crawled, and there would be drops if they were injured and walked away. Focusing his magic, he levitated himself high into the air.

From up high, he spotted what he was looking for. Tire tracks led from the direction of the mountains to the ambush point, then back again. Jumping on his bike, he flew into the air and slowly followed the tracks. They led him first to a ridge that had seen some kind of disturbance. Landing, he looked around and found hundreds of bullet casings. There were also areas where the dirt was blown outward in a circular pattern. He pulled out his GPS device and plotted the spot. Harry then pulled out his digital voice recorder and hit the record button.

“The spot where the ambush originated from has been marked on the GPS. The ground is covered in bullet casings ... 7.62,” he said as he picked one up and sniffed it. “Freshly fired. There is also evidence of mortar use. There are tire tracks leading from the mountains to the

ambush site. I believe they picked up Stark and drove him back toward the mountains.” He clicked the stop button and got back to work.

Soon after, he was back on his bike and following the tracks from the air. They led him to the foot of a rocky mountain range. The mountains were blanketed with snow on their upper halves and would be impossible to drive on without following the treacherous dirt roads that snaked up their lower portions. As he tried to follow the tracks, they eventually became mixed with many other tire tracks. By then, it was impossible to reliably follow. The only thing he could do was follow the road until its end and hope that he might find something.

To call it a road by that point was being very generous. In reality, it was little more than a trail that was barely wide enough for one truck to safely drive on. Eventually, the trail ended with a short, makeshift cul-de-sac. If they made it to that point, Stark was likely loaded on a pack mule to continue their journey. Harry sighed. It would be very difficult to find him, assuming he was even there. The only thing to do was continue flying around.

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Tony Stark laid down on his filthy bed and groaned. The wounds in his chest were very painful. It didn't help that he was forced to do physical work before he even had a chance to properly heal. 'When I get back to the States, I'm going to sue my captors for everything they have,' he thought as he closed his eyes. He very much hoped that he would make it back home one day.

Tony was, of course, a very smart man. He knew the odds of him making it out of the cave alive were slim at best. As he lay there, he thought of the things he missed the most ... his adoring fans, the sexy women that continuously threw themselves at him, cheeseburgers, and of course, Pepper. "What I wouldn't do for a cheeseburger right now," he said tiredly. His belly was full of the bean slop that Yinsen was so adept at making. It wasn't particularly tasty, but at least it kept him alive.

He didn't even know how long he had been in captivity. At least several weeks he guessed, based on the rate of healing that his body had gone through. Though his eyes were closed, he could see the bluish-white light of his Arc Reactor through his eyelids. It still amazed him that he was able to create such a thing in that disgusting, little cave. Once completed, it had given him a revelation. He had so much more to offer the world besides weapons of mass destruction. 'If I survive, things are going to change,' he told himself as he rolled onto his side to try and fall asleep.

Some distance away, Harry was getting ready to explore the area again. He found that using the thermal function on his binoculars at night was the best way to find someone up in the cold mountains. Over the last couple of weeks, he had found several terrorist training camps from their campfires alone. He sent their coordinates to Fury, and there was no doubt he would pass them along once Harry was done in the area.

As he lazily flew over the mountains, he kept the binoculars to his eyes. He spotted something moving in the distance but discovered that it was probably a snow leopard. His search continued. It was deeper into the night when he spotted something intriguing. A small, circular cave mouth was radiating heat. Not a lot of heat, but enough to show up on his thermal camera. Turning them off, he remained invisible and landed silently on a semi-smooth patch of ground not too far away. Gathering the power of the stone, he infused it with his magic, and his eyes blazed green. Immediately, the world around him became visible. What he saw was shocking. Scattered around the cave entrance were crates and loose missiles that were piled high. Whoever was in the cave was very well-stocked. With it being so late at night, he wasn't surprised to see only two guards lazily walking back and forth while chit-chatting. Going invisible, he apparated right outside of the cave. His apparation was near-silent, so the two guards didn't even bother turning around. Harry quietly snuck into the cave.

The entrance corridor was a fairly tight fit, but it eventually opened up into a larger cavern. There were lights and power cords strung up along the walls of the cave giving everyone inside just enough light to see. Here and there, he could see men sleeping on the floor on thin mats. He continued onward until he came to an area where a man was watching several screens. On those screens were the feed of several security cameras. He smiled when he saw the sleeping form of his target. Stepping away, he silently apparated back to his bike.

He pulled out his magically modified handgun and screwed an equally modified suppressor onto the end of it. He then kickstarted his bike and hit the gas as he made himself visible.

The two terrorists who were guarding the cave were chatting quietly. So far nothing had been out of the ordinary, not that they expected it to be. They were deep in the mountain range where the Americans rarely ventured.

Harry smiled wickedly as the wheels touched down. Immediately, he turned off the invisibility booster and skidded to a stop. Their eyes widened as he appeared out of thin air, and the side of his bike slammed into their bodies, sending them flying back. Before Harry even got off, he pointed his gun and silently shot them each in the chest. Getting off his bike, he walked by them and put a round into each of their heads. Harry jogged into the cave and began silently shooting anyone he came across. One man came around the corner with a steaming cup of tea in his hand. The cup broke as it hit the floor when a spray of blood and brains erupted from the back of his skull. Harry heard another man call out, likely having heard the broken glass. Harry pressed flat against the wall. As the man came around, Harry pistol-whipped him on top of the head, sending him falling face-first with a grunt. His body jerked when a bullet pierced the back of his head. So far, so good, Harry thought as he came upon the few men who were in the security camera room. They didn't even get the chance to turn their heads as blood sprayed across the screens. The man at the desk slumped over and fell out of the chair. Harry walked over and checked the feed again. Stark was still in bed.

Getting through the thick, metal doors was child's play for him. All it took were a couple of Unlocking Charms and they opened right up. Harry's plan was to get in unnoticed and apparate

away with Stark. Unfortunately, his plan had hit a bit of a snag. After hitting the billionaire with a Stunner, he checked him over and saw some kind of glowing technology implanted inside of his chest. "That's not good," he told himself as he looked it over. Meanwhile, he heard yells back toward the front of the cave. It seemed that they were finally noticing the couple dozen bodies that Harry had left behind. Throwing his hand out, he sealed the steel door shut to buy him some time. Pulling out his camera, he made sure to send plenty of pictures of the device directly to Fury. Putting the camera away, he quickly decided to wake him up. Harry wasn't sure what that thing was in his chest, but he guessed that it wasn't there because it looked cool. He didn't want to take a chance that it would react poorly to his magic. 'Besides, I can always erase his memory later,' Harry thought as he shook the man awake.

Tony's eyes fluttered open after being woken from a pleasant dream and instantly became confused. "You're not Playmate of the Year, Sara Jean Underwood."

"Wow. You really are a genius," he replied with a British accent. The man was tall and good-looking and was wearing black, tactical gear that a member of the Special Forces would normally wear. "I'm here to get you out."

This immediately perked him up. He sat up straight with all previous sleepiness suddenly gone. "Well, it's about damn time. I was beginning to think that everyone thought me dead! I can only imagine the number of distraught women ..." he said, putting his shoes on. "... crying, throwing themselves from tall buildings," he carried on. "But don't worry. I'll be there to dry their tears personally." Harry rolled his eyes before seeing someone else in the room. An older man was lying in a bed and was just coming to.

"Subject is delusional," Harry said into his recorder before putting it away. "Now let's go. But first though ... Is he one of them?" Harry pointed his gun at the man's head with his finger on the trigger when Stark grabbed his wrist and pulled it down. He looked at Stark.

"Hey! That's Yinsen ... a friend of mine!" he glared. "He's coming with us," Stark told him with some finality. Harry raised an eyebrow. Shrugging, he hit Yinsen with a Stunner and Transfigured him into a coin. Harry then summoned him into his hand and stuck him in his pocket. Stark choked on his own spit when he saw what he had done.

"I would do the same with you, but unfortunately, I'm not sure if that thing would survive," Harry said, pointing at the Arc Reactor. "Do you need that?"

"Uh ... What?" Tony asked, still trying to wrap his head around the display of strange power.

"That glowing thing. Do you need it?" Harry repeated.

"Only to survive," Tony answered back.

"Then we'll have to do it the old-fashioned way," Harry said. "Stay behind me and stay close."

Tony was about to say something when he pushed his hand out and the thick, steel door of his rock prison was blasted off of its hinges. He heard screams of panic from outside of his cavern. He coughed as dust was sent all over the place. When the man began walking, Tony did as he was instructed and stayed close behind. He watched as the man angled his arm around the corner. Suddenly, the corridor beyond lit up with orange light. More screams quickly followed. "C'mon."

Tony gasped as he crossed the exit. Beneath him, he could see a pair of twisted legs sticking out from underneath the partially crushed, metal door. Blood was leaking out, and it was clear that the man was dead. As he peeked around the man's shoulder, he saw several of his captors running around, completely engulfed in flames. He jumped when automatic gunfire erupted. He couldn't believe his eyes when the bullets seemed to ricochet off of a semi-transparent, blue force field. He didn't see Harry pull out a grenade and toss it toward the terrorists. He did, however, fall over when the explosion made his ears ring. He blinked away the fuzziness as the man pulled him to his feet. Stumbling slightly while a high-pitched whine was going off in his head, Tony saw complete destruction around him. There were body parts, blood spatters, and men groaning in pain and distress while slowly dying. He knew that he shouldn't feel bad for these scumbags, but he had to admit, it was a hell of a way to die. Still, it was them or him ... and he wanted to go home.

Staying right on his tail, he hid behind him as the man in black whipped out a handgun and fired shots at anyone unlucky enough to meet them. Tony didn't know how long it had been, but finally, he felt the cold, crisp air of freedom as they exited the cave. In the distance, they heard panicked yelling as more men were surely coming. "I think we need to skedaddle," Tony wisely told him.

"I completely agree," he told him. Tony then watched as he pulled out what appeared to be a block of some kind of white explosive. He pressed a few buttons on an electronic pad attached to the block and tossed it into the entrance of the cave. The man then threw his leg over a fancy-looking bike and started it up.

"That?! That's our escape?!" Tony sputtered.

"Hey, if you'd rather stay ..."

Tony quickly hopped on behind him. "I'd rather leave. The accommodations here are terrible. Worse than the Four Seasons."

"Hang on!" the man called out.

Tony's heart was pounding as the back tire began to peel out, and they gunned it. "SHIT!" Tony yelled as they hit a sloped rock and jumped it like a ramp. Below them was a fifty-foot drop, only they didn't fall. They kept on climbing. "What the ...?"

Below them, the ground tore past them as they accelerated. For the first time since his capture, he felt hopeful. "WOOOOOHOOOOO!" he yelled happily and punched the air.

"That was right in my fucking ear, dude!" the man complained.

"SORRY!" he yelled back. He wasn't sorry.