

## Chapter 10

Sirius' leg bounced anxiously as he sat in a chair in the hallway, watching as Healers rushed in and out of Harry's room. They'd yet to hear word of how he was doing, and the wait was killing him. Next to him, Marlene clutched his hand tightly, tear streaks marring her pale cheeks.

When the elevator opened a short distance down the hall, his hand instinctively reached for his wand, but he relaxed when he recognized familiar faces. Dora stumbled in her rush to get out, her short, mousy brown hair whipping around her face as she looked up and down the hall. Spotting Sirius, she led her parents over to him. Jenna broke away from the group at a dead sprint the moment she spotted her mother and collapsed into her arms.

"I'm fine, sweetheart," Marlene whispered as her daughter cried. "I'm all right."

"Where's Harry?" Dora asked worriedly.

"The Healers are still treating him," Sirius said. "He'll live, but... It looked like Nott's spell hit his spine."

Dora covered her mouth, her eyes tearing up before she turned and buried her face in Andi's shoulder.

"Harry's tough," Ted said, rubbing her back. "He'll pull through just fine. You'll see."

"I'm so sorry," Marlene said, tears starting to fall from her eyes as she clutched Jenna like a lifeline. "This is all my fault."

"No, it's not," Sirius told her firmly. "It's-

“Mr. Black?”

Sirius stopped mid-sentence and turned sharply. A tall, thin Healer with short, grey hair looked down at him with a clipboard in his hands. The man had a sharp, prominent jaw and a pair of square glasses covering his bright blue eyes.

“Yes,” Sirius said.

“I’m Healer Powell. I’ll be treating Harry,” he replied in a calm, soothing tone.

“How is he?” Sirius asked anxiously while getting to his feet.

“He’s in rough shape,” Healer Powell admitted. “The Piercing Hex lacerated his large intestine, but the bigger issue is that it shattered two of his vertebrae. I’m afraid there was no chance of healing them, so we’ve had to vanish the bones entirely. He’ll be in for a long night while they regrow.”

“What about his legs?” Sirius asked with a touch of impatience and hope in his voice. “Will he be able to walk after you have regrown the bones?”

“Unfortunately, that’s a little less certain,” Healer Powell replied. “The majority of people who undergo this kind of procedure do regain the ability to walk after a year or two. However, about a quarter of patients can take far longer to recover, and a small percentage never regain full use of their legs. I’m sorry, but it all depends on how he responds to the treatment.”

“Can we see him?” Dora asked.

"Of course," the Healer said, stepping aside so she could rush into the room before turning back to Sirius. "We'll do the best we can. If you have any more questions, just ask the nurse to call for me."

"Thank you," Sirius nodded.

Healer Powell walked past them down the hall while Sirius and the others made their way into the room. Harry lay on the bed staring up at the ceiling, his face abnormally serious. Dora had taken the chair next to his bed and watched him worriedly, clutching his hand in both of hers.

"Harry?" Sirius called.

Blinking, he turned his head and perked up.

"Sirius! It's about time," Harry said, lifting his head and staring at him with a penetrating gaze. "How did he find us?"

Sirius was disconcerted by the question and his Godson's unusual behavior. Licking his lips, he plastered a smile on his face.

"Don't worry about that right now. Just focus on-"

"Sirius," Harry interrupted firmly, almost angrily. "How?"

Taking a look at the young man, he held his unwavering gaze for a long moment before sighing and reaching into his pocket.

“We found this near the bathrooms,” he said, handing it to Harry.

Holding the newspaper clipping in his hand, Harry stared at the picture of himself and Sirius that had been taken at Union Station. In the background, Marlene could be seen over Harry’s shoulder, smiling and hugging Jenna.

“Damn it,” Harry muttered, dropping his head back onto the pillow.

“I had a pretty good idea what happened when we found this, so I used our trackers to look for any signs of magic from you,” Sirius explained. “Thank Merlin for Underage Tracking Charms.”

“Harry?” Marlene called softly. “I’m so, so sorry.”

“What? Why?” Harry asked sharply, his brow furrowed. “This isn’t your fault.”

“But he was after me,” Marlene said miserably.

“They were after me, too. They just didn’t know I’d be there,” Harry told her.

“How did you two escape, anyway?” Sirius asked, hoping to change the subject.

“That was Harry,” Marlene said, smiling at him softly. “He was brilliant. He used Wandless magic to summon his wand and unlock the cell they were holding us in. I grabbed my wand, and we crawled out of the window.”

“When did you learn Wandless magic?” Andi asked, taking a seat next to her daughter.

“I started reading up on it after Dora dueled that Nigerian witch last year,” Harry replied, his eyes focused back on the ceiling. “I need to get better at it, though. It barely worked.”

“But you escaped,” Ted smiled. “That’s the important thing.”

Harry shrugged, his brow furrowed thoughtfully.

“And how did the house end up destroyed?” Sirius asked.

He noticed that even Marlene looked at Harry expectantly at that question.

“I saw some Powdered Erumpent Horn on a shelf,” he told them. “I thought it would make a good distraction if they found us missing. I stuck it to one of the support beams and set a ”

“I’d say it worked,” Sirius smirked. “You practically leveled the place.”

“Not well enough,” Harry grumbled. “Nott survived. He dueled me like I was a first-year. Just slapped everything I cast aside like it was nothing and hit me with a spell I didn’t even know how to stop.”

Growling angrily, he slammed his fist on the bed and then winced in pain from the sudden movement.

“Harry, you can’t expect to take on a fully qualified wizard, let alone a Death Eater like Nott at your age,” Andi said, trying to soothe his anger. “You’re still young.”

"I don't care!" Harry yelled. "I'm not going to let those fuckers hurt me or my family ever again!"

Andi was taken aback by the sudden shouting. Despite his attitude towards authority, Harry had never raised his voice to her before. It was a relief for Sirius to finally understand what was bothering him so much. He knew Harry was feeling the same fear, anger, and frustration he had during the war.

"Excuse me."

They all turned to the young, pretty brunette nurse in the doorway.

"I'm Harry's nurse, Natalie. It's time for his potion," she said, holding up a bottle of Skele-grow.

With a flick of her wand, she raised Harry's bed so that he was sitting up and moved to stand next to him. Pouring a measured portion into a goblet, she passed it to him with a smile.

"Once you take this, you'll have to remain flat on your back and stay as still as possible," Natalie warned him. "The bones won't grow right if you move around too much."

Sighing, Harry nodded and took a mouthful of the potion. With a grimace, he swallowed hard and shivered.

"Urgh, this tastes like Yeti piss," he said.

"Harry!" Andi exclaimed scoldingly.

“Oh, it’s fine,” Natalie smiled. “I’ve heard a lot worse.”

Downing the rest of the potion as fast as he could, Harry laid back. The nurse reclined the bed back into a flat position and covered him with the blanket.

“I’ll come back in a couple of hours with your Pain Relief and Sleep Potions,” she told him.

“When can I get out of here?” Harry asked.

“The Healer will let you know once your bones are grown back,” Natalie replied.

Sighing, Harry laid back and stared at the ceiling.

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The next morning, Healer Powell waved his wand over Harry while everyone waited anxiously.

“Well, everything looks good,” he proclaimed. “The bones regrew nicely, and the nerves look good.”

“Does that mean I can go?” Harry asked hopefully.

Healer Powell pocketed his wand and smiled.

“Yes, you can go,” he chuckled. “I’m going to send you home with some Strengthening Potions to help your muscles heal faster. There’s also a belt you’ll need to wear. It’s enchanted to

vanish any bodily waste every few hours. I'll go sign your paperwork and have them send up a wheelchair."

"Does he need any sort of brace to protect his back?" Andi asked.

"No," the Healer said, shaking his head. "The worst of the damage is repaired. It's just a matter of the nerves rebuilding the connection to the brain right now. He'll be fine as long as he doesn't take any more curses to the spine."

"We certainly don't plan on anything like this happening again," Andi said with a stern look in Harry's direction.

"What?" Harry asked defensively. "It's not like I planned for it to happen the first time either."

Dora snickered while her mother rolled her eyes. Healer Powell smiled and made a note on his clipboard.

"Any other questions?" he asked.

When no one had any, he turned and left the room. While they waited for his discharge, Andi magicked him into a fresh set of clothes.

"That was a Switching Spell, right?" Harry asked, to which Andi nodded. "I'll have to learn that soon."

"I'll teach you when we get home," she smiled.



A few minutes later, Natalie returned, pushing a wheelchair into the room. Parking it next to the bed, she set the brakes. Sirius made to help him, but Harry waved him off. Scooting to the edge of the bed, he heaved himself into the seat using the arms of the chair for support. His legs fell uselessly from the bed and dangled until he situated them properly.

“You’re a pro at this already,” Natalie said.

Flashing him a pretty smile, she turned around and handed the discharge paperwork to Sirius for him to sign. Harry was at the perfect height to check out Natalie’s round bum in her crisp white uniform.

“Maybe this isn’t so bad after all,” he muttered with a smile.

“Perv,” Dora muttered back, smacking his arm lightly.

Harry turned to her, grinning and wiggling his eyebrows until she giggled at his antics. Once the paperwork was signed, she wheeled him out of the room as they followed Sirius toward the elevator.

“Time to head home,” Sirius sighed while pushing the button.

“Home?” Harry asked. “What about the tournament? If we get there soon, we can still catch the finals.”

“Aren’t you tired?” Andi asked.

“I’m fine,” Harry replied. “Besides, if I get tired, I’m sure I can find someplace to sit. Oh, look!”

Dora snorted as he gestured to his wheelchair. Andi gave him an unimpressed look, but her lips twitched when she shook her head.

“Harry, I think Marlene would like to get home, too,” Sirius said.

“It’s alright, Sirius,” she told him with a small smile. “Why don’t you go with Harry? I’ll take Jenna home. We’ll be fine.”

“Are you sure?” Sirius asked, his brow furrowed worriedly.

Nodding, Marlene whispered to him too softly for anyone else to hear. With a smile, Sirius turned and pressed a kiss to her lips.

“Alright,” he said. “Looks like we’re going back to the tournament.”

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Harry received a round of applause when Dora wheeled him into the stands of the arena. Smiling and waving to the crowd, they got settled just as the final rounds were announced.

“Harry!” Professor Wilkinson yelled, squeezing his way through the stands to sit next to them. “I didn’t expect to see you back so soon. How are you?”

“I’m alright, but it looks like I’ll be sitting this one out,” he joked.

Snorting, Sirius shook his head and explained, in detail, how bad his injuries were. While Professor Wilkinson frowned and stared at him worriedly, Harry watched the under-sixteen

championship match get underway. Flitwick was once again officiating as his final opponent from the year before, Arturo, faced off against a Brazilian witch. The match didn't take long, nor was it very exciting, but Arturo won in the end. Harry clapped with everyone else as the Italian wizard bowed to have the medal placed around his neck.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Professor Wilkinson said. "If you need any special arrangements at school, please let me know."

"I'll be fine," Harry said, waving off his concern.

Down in the arena, Fleur Delacour of France and Laszlo Barta of Hungary took up their positions for the under-eighteen championship match. This match was much more exciting, in Harry's opinion. While not all of the spells they cast were silent, the majority were, and he recognized the majority of them. Watching the gorgeous blonde outpace the Hungarian, he wondered how he would do against her.

"Professor?" Harry called. "What would I need to do to win in a wheelchair?"

"At dueling?" Professor Wilkinson asked, blinking in surprise at the question. "Well, you'd need to really work on your defense. With your limited movement, your shields would have to be impenetrable. We'd also need to work on your speed. By necessity, you'd have to be on the defensive more than most. That will leave you very small windows to get on the offense. It would be difficult but not impossible."

"You did say it was a bit too easy for me," Harry smirked. "Now I have a challenge."

Professor Wilkinson laughed, "That's certainly one way of looking at it."

Eventually, Fleur cornered Laszlo and disarmed him. Smiling, she accepted her medal graciously and rejoined her mother in the stands.

"I'll be right back," Harry said.

Ignoring the questions being thrown his way, he wheeled himself into the aisle and started making his way around the stands circling the arena.

"Excuse me... Pardon me... Sorry," he said as people were forced to lift their feet or stand to avoid having their feet run over by his wheels.

As he neared Fleur and her mother, a young girl looked up at him and gasped.

"Hey, Fleur," Harry smiled. "Congrats on your win."

"Merci," she replied while the little girl chattered away rapidly in French.

"Listen, would you duel me after the tournament is over?" Harry asked.

"You weesh to duel me like zis?" she asked, eyeing his wheelchair dubiously.

"Yeah," Harry shrugged. "I gotta test out the new wheels."

"Why not duel ze boy 'oo just won?" Fleur asked, nodding to Arturo.

“Because I beat him last year, and I know I can beat him again,” Harry replied. “I need a challenge.”

Fleur blinked and exchanged a glance with her mother.

“Eef you are sure,” she said with a shrug.

“Great,” Harry grinned. “I’ll ask Flitwick to referee after the last match.”

When Harry started to wheel himself away, the little girl got louder and looked at her mother pleadingly.

“Monsieur,” the woman called. “Would you mind giving my daughter an autograph? She is a big fan of the ‘Arry Potter books.”

“Sure,” Harry shrugged. “She knows those are fake, though, right?”

“Oui,” she smiled while pulling the latest book out of her purse. “But she still loves zem. Does your family write zem?”

“Oh, no,” Harry chuckled. “Some woman in England does. I just collect the royalty checks. What’s your daughter’s name?”

“Gabrielle,” the woman replied.

Taking the quill she handed him, Harry wrote,

*To my biggest fan, Gabrielle. Love, Harry Potter*

Smiling, he handed the book to the little girl. Her mother translated his words into French, causing her to squeal excitedly. With a beaming smile, she lunged forward and hugged him, nearly falling into his lap. Harry laughed and hugged her back.

“Merci,” Gabrielle said, smiling up at him.

“You’re welcome,” Harry said before turning to Fleur. “See you after the finals?”

She gave him a warm smile and nodded. Spinning his wheelchair around, Harry made his way back to his seat.

“Excuse me... Sorry... Nice shoes,” he said as people lifted their feet out of the way again.

As he parked his seat next to Dora, Sirius looked over at him and grinned knowingly.

“I’m guessing by that smile on your face you got yourself a hot date,” he said, wiggling his eyebrows.

“Date?” Harry asked, confused. “No, I asked her for a duel. What good would a date do me? My dick doesn’t work.”

“Harry!” Andi hissed scoldingly. “And you really shouldn’t be dueling less than an hour after you got out of hospital.”

“What am I supposed to do?” Harry asked. “Sit around and feel sorry for myself?”

When she didn't answer, he turned his attention to the match taking place in the arena. He'd missed the finalist's names, but they were both very skilled. The match was much faster-paced than the others he'd watched so far. Not a word was said as they slung complex and powerful spells at each other with terrifying speed. Privately, he vowed to himself that he would get to that point. He wouldn't stop until there wasn't a witch or wizard in the world that would struggle to beat him in a duel.

After a fast and furious but short duel, a Romanian witch was crowned the under-twenty-one International Dueling champion. Harry barely waited for the applause to die down before he started wheeling himself towards the stairs.

"Harry!" Sirius yelled. "Slow down."

Harry ignored him and bounced down the steps. He frowned when his wheels had trouble finding traction on the straw-covered ground, but he eventually got going.

"Hey, Flitwick!" he yelled.

"Ah, Mr. Potter," Flitwick smiled. "It's good to see you back. You had all of us quite worried yesterday. I hope this injury is only temporary."

"Me too," Harry said. "Listen, I asked Fleur if she would duel me for a bit of fun. Would you referee for us?"

"Now?" Flitwick asked incredulously, looking from him to Sirius. "Are you sure you don't want to perhaps heal up first?"

"I'm as healed as I'm going to get for now," Harry said.

“You know, just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should,” Sirius said.

Harry and Flitwick both turned to look at him incredulously.

“Did I really just say that?” he asked, pointing to himself.

They nodded.

“Right, well, the Healer did say he would be fine as long as he didn’t take another curse to the spine,” Sirius said.

“I see,” Flitwick said thoughtfully. “He’ll have to have any protective gear approved before the next tournament, but since this is just an exhibition match, I can cast a localized Protective Charm.”

“Okay,” Sirius nodded. “Are you sure you want to do this, Harry?”

“I’m sure,” Harry said firmly.

“Fine. While you do that, I’m going to get a drink,” he said, grimacing. “Just saying those words left a bad taste in my mouth.”

As Sirius walked away, Harry turned to the stands and waved Fleur down. Walking down the steps gracefully, she stopped next to them expectantly.



“Ms. Delacour,” Flitwick smiled. “I’ll be casting a localized Protective Charm around Mr. Potter’s spine to ensure he doesn’t aggravate his injury. Other than that, all standard rules apply. Is that acceptable to you?”

“Of course,” Fleur nodded.

“Good, why don’t you go take up your position,” he smiled.

When she turned to walk away, Harry took a moment to admire her round, swaying backside.

“You know, the view from down here isn’t so bad,” Harry quipped.

“No comment,” Flitwick muttered from behind him as he cast the Protective Charm on his back.

Harry was certain he could hear the smirk in the man’s voice.

“You’re all set,” he said a moment later, walking halfway between him and Fleur. “Duelists ready?”

Harry and Fleur nodded, their faces turning serious.

“On my mark,” Flitwick called.

There was a pause, and people who had been getting ready to leave retook their seats. After several seconds, red sparks shot from Flitwick’s wand. Harry went on the offensive immediately, casting as fast as he could at Fleur. She weathered the onslaught by twirling out of the way gracefully and shielding when needed. When she came to a sudden stop, Harry’s aim

went wide, giving her the opportunity to return fire. He raised a shield and found himself trapped on defense.

Harry blocked and parried as fast as he could, but he could never get a break long enough to get back on the offensive. Fleur was calm and patient as she probed for weaknesses, looking for a way past his guard. He knew it was only a matter of time until she succeeded, but he couldn't think of a way to turn the tables.

Simple spells gave way to more complex Curses, Hexes, and Charms as Fleur continued to cast rapidly. Harry raised a shield and leaned sideways out of instinct when she aimed a Bludgeoning Hex at his head. The spell hit hard, and with his weight unbalanced, Harry's wheelchair tipped over. Grunting as he hit the ground, he pushed himself into a seat position and continued to defend.

He gritted his teeth in frustration and fought to keep himself upright as her spells slammed forcefully against his shields. Watching as her wand twirled through the air effortlessly, a sudden idea came to mind. When the next spell knocked him flat on his back, Harry reached out with his free hand and tried to pull her wand out of her hand.

Fleur looked down at her wand when it refused to move. Looking at Harry with an expression that was a mix of confusion and consternation, her eyes widened when he raised his wand. He tried to cast the Disarming Charm, but only a handful of red sparks fell limply from the tip. With a burst of magic, Fleur ripped her wand free of his magic grip and sent her own Disarming Charm in return. Harry tried to shield, but he was too slow getting his half-working body into position and watched helplessly as his wand shot from his grip. Tumbling end over end, it landed in the dirt halfway between the two of them.

"Stop!" Flitwick yelled. "Winner, Fleur Delacour!"

Closing his eyes, Harry collapsed on his back, panting.

"Fuck," he grumbled.

While he took a moment to catch his breath, he heard footsteps rapidly approaching. Opening his eyes, he sat up as Sirius righted his wheelchair.

"You alright?" he asked worriedly.

"I'm fine," Harry muttered unhappily. "My pride broke my fall."

Sirius snorted and helped him back into his wheelchair. When he looked up, he spotted Fleur approaching him and smiled.

"Thanks for the duel, Fleur," he said, holding out his hand. "This wheelchair is even worse for dueling than I thought."

"Eet was my pleasure," Fleur smiled, shaking his hand. "You were very impressive. I look forward to dueling you again."

"Me too," Harry said.

"If you're done, can we go home so I can check on Marlene?" Sirius asked.

"You just don't want to get caught staring at Fleur's mom again," Harry smirked.

Sirius sighed and looked at him tiredly while Fleur covered her mouth and giggled.

"We're going," Sirius said, pushing him away.

“Bye, Fleur!” Harry yelled, waving over his shoulder.

“Au revoir,” Fleur called.