

Chapter 23

Slowly waking, Harry pulled the warm body firmly against his chest as he inhaled a flowery, feminine scent. Blinking his eyes open, he smiled softly at the head of short, blonde hair that filled his vision.

Lily, Narcissa, and Bellatrix were busy studying for the end of year exams and, in Narcissa's case, her OWLs. They were intent on doing well, which left Harry more time to spend with Connie.

Kissing her shoulder, Harry trailed his hand up her firm stomach to cup one of her round, perky breasts. Connie moaned in her sleep, her bum wiggling against his swelling member. Taking her nipple between his fingers, he rolled it gently, causing the crinkled nub to slowly stiffen. He felt Connie's fingers trail down his arm as she inhaled a deep breath and wiggled back against him more firmly.

"Mmh, someone's happy to see me," she mumbled in a deep, sleepy tone.

"What gave me away?" Harry asked, giving her shoulder an open-mouthed kiss, sucking lightly at the skin.

"The Beater's Bat wedged between my cheeks," Connie said.

She flexed the muscles of her bum, trapping his hardened length between her muscular globes. With a groan, Harry flexed his length in return, his fingers rolling her engorged nipple.

"Mmh," Connie moaned. "What time is it?"

Harry squinted as he looked at the clock on the wall.

"Just after six," he said.

“Good,” she breathed.

Pulling away from him, she rolled over quickly and pushed his shoulders back onto the mattress. She kissed him passionately while crawling over him, her toned legs straddling his waist. Harry groaned into her mouth when she rolled her hips, grinding her slick fold on his throbbing length. His hand caressed her body as she teased his head along her entrance before finally lowering herself onto him. Connie pulled her lips from his and sat upright as her folds reached his base.

“God, you’re beautiful,” Harry said, taking her tight, fit body.

Smiling, she ran her nails down his chest while rocking her hips. Slowly at first, she built to a vigorous rhythm, her tight folds sliding like silk up and down his shaft. Tilting her head back, Connie moaned wantonly as his hands cupped and squeezed her trembling breasts.

Sliding his hands down to her hips, Harry suddenly rolled her over onto her back. His length speared into her quivering depths, drawing a gasp from her lips as he kissed her next.

“Oh, fuck, yes!” Connie hissed. “Keep fucking me like this, and you’ll end up with another mistress.”

“Can I still call you professor?” Harry asked teasingly.

“You can call me anything you want, just don’t stop,” she panted.

Smiling, he bent down and kissed her hard, his hips pulling back before snapping forward. Each thrust was delivered with enough power to drive her body into the mattress. The springs squeaked, and the headboard thumped rhythmically into the wall as he rutted into her hot, molten depths. When Connie threw her head back to moan, her body shivering, he latched onto her exposed neck. Harry sucked at the delicate skin harshly while her fingers tangled in his hair. He was intent on leaving a mark for everyone to see.

Connie dug her heels into his bum, urging him to move harder and go deeper. She writhed under him, her nails digging sharply into his back as she gasped for breath. Harry was overcome with a sense of possessiveness as the beautiful, powerful witch teetered on the brink.

Pushing himself up, he stared at her expressive face as he thrust into her savagely. Connie's face screwed up in pleasure as she threw her head back and howled, her entire body shivering and shaking. Harry continued pounding into her relentlessly as she gasped beneath him, her mouth hanging open in a silent scream.

"Harry," Connie whimpered, her muscles spasming while she clenched her eyes shut.

Harry held off his own climax as long as he could, delighting in the expression of agonized pleasure that danced across her face. He kept her floating in a cloud of overwhelming bliss for several long moments before he finally erupted inside of her. As he pinned his pelvis to hers, his length pulsing and leaping within her depths, Connie clenched her legs around his waist. Tears swam in her eyes as she was finally able to come down from her peak, her breath coming in sharp trembling pants.

Seeing that she had no intention of releasing him anytime soon, Harry carefully rested his weight on her and buried his face in the crook of her neck. He kissed and sucked at the pale skin, spotted with red from his earlier attention. When she'd finally caught her breath, Connie stroked his back gently, the soothing sensation nearly causing him to drift back to sleep.

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After grabbing a quick shower and giving Connie a kiss goodbye, Harry headed down to the Great Hall for breakfast. Immediately, he could tell something was off from the loud chatter and the disgruntled looks on Lily and her friends' faces.

"What's wrong?" he asked, sitting down next to her.

“Someone,” she said, pointedly looking down the table at the Grinning Marauders, “managed to sneak into our dorm last night and steal everyone’s panties.”

“Do you know how weird it feels going commando while wearing a skirt?” Alice asked with a scowl.

“Can’t say that I do,” Harry replied, fighting a grin.

Before his fifth year, he remembered his Godfather telling him all about the Great Panty Raid of seventy-six. Using the Marauders Map and tricking a couple of prefects, they’d managed to sneak into all of the house dorms in a single night and steal the panties of every girl fifth year and up. It was an impressive feat, and Harry had to admit it was pretty funny.

Not that he would ever tell the girls that.

“Can’t you just transfigure a pair or conjure them?” Harry asked.

The girls surrounding stared, nonplussed, for a few seconds before muttering curses and pulling out their wands.

“So, they got you too?” Narcissa asked as she watched sheets of parchment and quills being turned into knickers.

“They got into Slytherin?” Dorcas asked incredulously.

“And Hufflepuff,” Narcissa nodded. “I’ll bet they got into Ravenclaw as well.”

“How the hell did they manage that?” Marlene asked.

"I don't know, but we better get them back," Narcissa said, glaring down at Sirius. "They took my favorite pair."

"The black, Arcomantula ones?" Lily asked sympathetically.

Narcissa nodded.

"Bastards," Lily muttered under her breath.

"Can I curse them?" Bellatrix asked hopefully.

"Not yet," Harry said, smiling when she pouted. "If you don't get them back by the end of the day, then yes."

Bellatrix's pout turned into a smirk, her violet eyes taking on a predatory gleam.

"I'm not sure if I want them back," Alice shuddered. "Who knows what they've done with them."

"Alice," Mary whined. "Did you have to put those thoughts in my head?"

Alice grinned unrepentantly and shrugged.

Finishing their breakfast quickly, the girls left early, heading to the loo to put on their panties. Looking down the table at James and Sirius, Harry decided to give them a fair warning. Standing up, he walked over and sat next to Sirius.

"Sneaking into all four girls' dorms in one night... that's pretty impressive," Harry said.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Sirius grinned.

Beside him, James puffed up his chest proudly, Remus looked away with a smirk, and Peter snickered.

“Sure, you don’t,” Harry said sarcastically, rolling his eyes. “Well, if you *do* know who did it, you might want to warn them to return those panties before dinner.”

“And why would they want to do that?” Sirius asked.

“Because Bella is hacked off, and I can only hold her back for so long,” Harry said.

Sirius and James shared a nervous glance, swallowing thickly.

“Right, we’ll pass the word along,” James told him.

“Good,” Harry smiled.

Standing up, he clapped Sirius on the shoulder and headed to class.

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As it turned out, the Marauders did give the girls their panties back – at lunch, when they dropped them from the ceiling of the Great Hall. Fortunately, they did it towards the end of the meal, when much less food was on the tables. That still didn’t stop some from ending up in the dishes, however. Nor was it much of a relief to the girls who scrambled to pick up their underwear and sort them out amongst themselves.

It seemed James and Sirius weren't too concerned with whose panties landed where. Even after the bell had rung for class, girls were still arguing about and trading their underwear back and forth throughout the hall, much to the displeasure of Professor McGonagall.

"We are so getting them back for this," Lily said, grimacing at a pair of lacy red panties covered in mashed potatoes.

"I want in," Amelia said, catching up to her.

"Me too," Bellatrix added.

Looking ahead, Harry watched as James and Sirius snickered while Marlene stuffed a black thong in her pocket with a blush. Part of him almost felt sorry for them. Almost.

He had to admit, though, they'd provided some much need relief from all of the frantic last-minute studying.

By the time they reached the Defense classroom, nearly half the girls in sixth year, and some that weren't, were all eager to get in on the revenge. They agreed to meet in the library after exams to come up with a solid plan.

"Alright, everyone, settle down," Connie called. "I know we've all had an exciting afternoon, but it's time to get to work. Today, we're going to be going over what to expect on the written exam."

The class groaned in unison.

"Trust me, I'm not a fan of it either, but you need to know it for your NEWTs next year," Connie said. "Now, turn to page two hundred and forty-six..."

Harry only listened with half an ear as Connie went over the theoretical side of Defense. Thankfully, she knew he was well-versed in everything she was talking about, so she didn't call on him. He still had to write out the practice essay that she passed out to the class, though.

He was about halfway through when Connie stood suddenly from her chair, the legs scraping loudly across the floor.

"Class dismissed! Harry, with me! Now!" Connie yelled.

As everyone muttered, confused, Harry stood. As he approached her desk, he noticed the leather-bound journal in her hands. It was the same one he'd linked to the Death Eater months ago. He'd barely reached her desk when she turned and walked briskly out of the classroom.

"What is it?" Harry asked once they were out in the hall.

In response, Connie handed him the journal.

Tonight, at midnight, we will free my faithful from Azkaban. While the Ministry panics and cowers at the might of Lord Voldemort, we will release the Dementors. My Death Eaters, the time has come for us to take our rightful place in the world. At the very top!

"Shit," Harry cursed under his breath.

"We need to tell Dumbledore and the Ministry," Connie said.

Harry nodded absently, reading over the details as they walked toward Dumbledore's office. Only a couple of minutes later, Connie was knocking on his door.

"Come in," Dumbledore called.

Pushing the door open, they strode in purposefully.

“You need to see this,” Harry said, walking over and placing the journal in his hands.

Raising a white, bushy brow, Dumbledore looked down at the page it was open to. A frown grew on his face, seeming to age right before their eyes.

“How did you come by this information?” he asked.

“I placed a Listening Charm on one of the Death Eaters we caught a few months ago,” Harry said.

“And you’re sure it’s accurate?” Dumbledore asked.

“As much as we can be,” Harry sighed. “This is how we knew they were going to attack the Browns. Besides, this really isn’t something we can ignore.”

Dumbledore sighed, “Indeed, we cannot.”

Standing, he motioned for Harry and Connie to follow him as he walked over to the Floo.

“Ministry of Magic, Minister’s Office,” he said, throwing in a handful of Floo Powder.

Dumbledore stepped forward and disappeared in a flash of emerald fire, followed quickly by Harry and Connie.

“Albus,” Minister Bagnold said. “To what do I owe this visit?”

"I'm afraid we have a problem," Dumbledore said. "Harry and Connie have just discovered Voldemort plans to assault Azkaban tonight, at midnight."

Bagnold sat up sharply and frowned. Taking the journal, she read it over quickly, her face rapidly paling.

"How certain are you that this is accurate?" she asked.

"Are certain as we can be," Harry replied.

"Is it possible they could be feeding us false information?" the Minister pressed, desperation creeping into her tone.

"It's possible," Harry admitted, glancing at Connie. "But we think it's highly unlikely."

"Regardless, this isn't something we can ignore," Dumbledore said. "I believe the best course of action is to trust this information until we have a reason not to."

"Yes, of course," Bagnold said, getting to her feet quickly. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to see Director Bones."

"Of course," Dumbledore said, giving Harry a pointed look when he opened his mouth to speak.

Harry wasn't happy but held his tongue. If Dumbledore was just trying to stop him from fighting, he'd contact David and offer to help. As the Minister left her office at a brisk walk, he followed the headmaster to the Floo and back to Hogwarts.

"What was that about?" Harry asked a bit more aggressively than he intended.

“In all likelihood, the Ministry will focus their efforts on protecting Azkaban,” Dumbledore explained. “Tom will plan for that. I expect he’ll release the Dementors before he attacks the prison, forcing the Aurors to contain them or risk thousands of lives and the exposure of our world. We must stop that from happening.”

While Harry thought on his words, the headmaster turned and threw a handful of powder into the Floo.

“Potter Manor,” he called, sticking his head in the flames.

Since he couldn’t hear the conversation, he looked over at Connie questioningly.

“He’s calling the Order,” she told him. “We’ve been holding meetings at the Potters.”

“Oh,” Harry said.

A moment later, Dumbledore pulled his head from the fire and stood.

“We have a meeting in an hour,” he said.

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Connie Side-Along Apparated Harry to a field in Wales, where they landed a couple of hundred yards away from a large stone manor. Dumbledore appeared a moment later before sending a Patronus past the gate and towards the house. As Harry looked around, he wondered what had happened to this place. Was it destroyed? Had his father sold it?

“You alright?” Connie asked softly.

"I'm fine," Harry said, squeezing her hand with a smile.

A few seconds later, the iron gate creaked and swung open. As they walked up the loose stone path to the house, Harry felt the wards wrap around him, the centuries old magic welcoming him. For the first time since he'd come back, Harry felt a real connection to his family. It was an emotional moment, but unfortunately, not one he had the time to dwell on.

Just as they made it to the manor, the front door opened, and Charlus greeted them with a smile.

"Well, I guess that answers the question if we're related," he said with a smile.

Harry smiled back, his throat feeling a bit tight as Charlus patted him on the shoulder.

"Has everyone arrived?" Dumbledore asked.

"Everyone but the Aurors," Charlus replied, ushering them into the house.

"That's to be expected," Dumbledore nodded.

"Is it that bad?" Charlus asked.

"I'm afraid it is," Dumbledore said.

Nodding, Charlus showed them into the dining room. The long, rectangular table was paced with both familiar and unfamiliar faces.

"Oh, hello," a woman with black, greying hair, high cheekbones, and a kind smile said. "You must be Harry. I'm Dorea."

“Nice to meet you,” Harry said, shaking her hand lightly.

As he looked at her closer, it was easy to see the Black family resemblance.

“I hear you’re dating two of my nieces,” she said with a small smirk.

“Er, yeah,” Harry said, scratching the back of his neck nervously.

“Oh, don’t worry, dear,” Dorea smiled. “I’m glad. It’s good Bellatrix and Narcissa have someone to point them in the right direction. Bellatrix, especially, has always been a handful.”

“I’ve noticed,” Harry smiled. “Just don’t tell her I said that.”

Dorea smiled, her dark, intelligent eyes sparkling.

“I’m sorry to break up the family reunion,” Dumbledore said. “However, we have important matters to discuss.”

“We’ll talk later,” Dorea said, patting the back of his hand gently.

Harry grinned, excited to get to know his grandparents better.

“I’m afraid I bring troubling news,” Dumbledore continued. “Lord Voldemort plans to liberate his followers from Azkaban and release the Dementors tonight at midnight.”

A rumble of near panic ran around the table.

“The Ministry will be protecting Azkaban. However, I would like the Order to help contain the Dementors,” he said. “If they aren’t stopped, the Aurors will be for to waste precious resources.”

Suddenly, the double oak doors to the dining room banged open, and David Bones rushed in.

“Sorry I’m late,” he said, taking a seat next to Connie.

“Quite understandable,” Dumbledore said. “Can you fill us in on the Ministry’s response.”

“Minister Bagnold had us call in all the available Aurors, but we’re not telling them why until the last minute,” David said. “She’s worried word my leak if they’re told too soon. The main bulk of our forces will wait in the ready room for the attack to start while a smaller force will patrol for the Dementors. The hope is that You-Know-Who will make a small breach in the wards to sneak in without raising the alarm, giving us a chance to trap them inside and surround them.”

“I was just asking the Order for volunteers to assist with the Dementors,” Dumbledore said.

“Good,” David nodded. “That would allow us to send more Aurors to Azkaban. I also convinced the Minister to officially ask for your assistance. I’m confident my Aurors can handle the Death Eaters, but You-Know-Who could decimate our forces. Even if we stop them at Azkaban, the losses are likely to be so bad it would take us years to recover.”

“Very well,” Dumbledore nodded.

“Thank you,” David said, looking relieved. “Do you have any idea where the Dementors are likely to go first?”

“Likely somewhere around Dunbar,” Dumbledore said thoughtfully. “That’s the closest part of the mainland from Azkaban.”

“Wait, aren’t the Ballycastle Bats playing in Scoughall tonight?” Daedalus Diggle asked thoughtfully.

“They are,” Charlus nodded. “That’s not far from Dunbar, and a magical crowd that big would be irresistible to the Dementors.”

“I agree,” Dumbledore nodded. “However, we shouldn’t count on them landing there first. Our best course of action would be to spread out along the coast on brooms.”

“I’ll take care of that,” Charlus said. “The owner of Nimbus Brooms owes me a favor.”

“Excellent,” Dumbledore said, taking out his pocket watch and popping it open. “We still have a few hours. I suggest you rest as much as you can until then. Charlus, Harry, I’m putting the two of you in charge of the Order while I’m away. I know Harry is young, but he is capable and knows Voldemort better than anyone, including myself.”

Harry straightened his shoulders as several people looked at him skeptically.

“He knows what he’s doing,” David added. “Harry held off You-Know-Who long enough at the Browns for Philston and his wife to escape.”

Standing, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a silver badge before passing it to Connie.

“I’m officially reinstating you. I want you to be the liaison between the Order and the Aurors,” he told her. “Keep me apprised of what’s happening. I’ll send help as soon as I can, but I don’t know how long it will be before backup will be available.”

“What do you want us to do if we can’t stop them?” Connie asked.

“Direct them to an isolated area and try to minimize the damage,” David sighed. “I wish I had a better answer, but stopping the attack on Azkaban has to be the priority.”

“We’ll stop them,” Harry said firmly.

Staring at him for a moment, David nodded. As he walked toward the door with Dumbledore behind him, he patted Harry on the shoulder.

“Kipsy,” Dorea called out.

With a pop, a House Elf wearing a clean, white tea towel appeared in front of her.

“Yes, mistress?” Kipsy asked.

“Could you start dinner for our guests?” she asked.

“Of course, mistress,” Kipsy said eagerly.

Bowing, he disappeared with a snap of his fingers.

“I need to make a few calls,” Charlus said as he got to his feet. “Make yourselves at home. Feel free to grab one of the rooms upstairs if you want to take a kip.”

“Does anyone have a map?” Connie asked.

Daedelus pulled one out of the stack of parchment and spread it out over the table. As he looked over it, Harry felt a tap on his shoulder. Dorea smiled kindly at him as he turned to look at her.

“Now, how about you tell me how you ended up with so many girlfriends,” she said, watching him intently.

“It’s a bit of a long story,” Harry said.

He spent the next hour talking with Dorea, who seemed genuinely curious about his life. She was a very kind woman, but there was a shrewdness to her gaze. More than once, when he stuck to the story he and Dumbledore had come up with for his backstory, he got the impression she didn’t quite believe him.

“You know, it’s too bad you and James don’t get along,” Dorea said.

“I really don’t have a problem with James,” Harry said. “I think he’s just upset that I’m dating Lily.”

“James is used to getting what he wants,” Dorea smiled. “I’ll admit, we spoiled him quite a bit.”

Before Harry could respond, Kipsy popped into the room along with three other elves, all levitating large platters of food.

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After a pleasant dinner, the atmosphere gradually grew more and more tense as the clock ticked closer to eleven. It was decided they would leave an hour early to make sure they were in position to intercept the Dementors. Just a few minutes before it was time to leave, a short, bald man with a long, curly mustache stepped into the room with an arm full of brooms.

“Reginald,” Charlus greeted him. “You’re just in time.”

“Sorry it took me so long,” Reginald said, wiping sweat from his brow after setting the stack of brooms on the table. “I lost the damn key again. What’s all this about, anyways?”

“I’ll explain later,” Charlus said. “We really must be going.”

“Alright, but you bring the drinks,” Reginald told him with a smile.

“It’s time. Everyone grab a broom,” Connie said. “You all know where to go. Remember, the first sign of Dementors, send up sparks as high as you can.”

“Dementors?” Reginald asked, his mustache twitching.

Harry followed Connie as they made their way outside with four other Order members. The moment they reached the edge of the wards, they all mounted their brooms and Disapparated. Reappearing a moment later, they arrived just outside the Quidditch stadium. Harry heard the crowd cheer loudly as the announcer shouted into the mic. The stadium itself sat right on the edge of the North Sea near a small, floating dock.

“At least it’s warm,” one of the Order members said. “We should be able to feel them coming.”

“In this darkness, I hope so,” another replied, looking up at the moonless sky. “We’ll be lucky to see anything.”

“Let’s spread out,” Connie said. “Harry and I will stay here. Frank, Matrin, you two head a little South. Charlus, you and Geoff keep an eye on the North.”

“Will do,” Charlus nodded.

As they flew off in opposite directions, Harry and Connie circled high above the stadium, the lights from the pitch the only thing illuminating the sky.

“I’m kind of surprised you didn’t fight to go to Azkaban with the other Aurors,” Harry said, his eyes scanning the black sky.

“And leave you here by yourself?” Connie asked with a smirk. “Your girlfriends would’ve killed me.”

Harry snorted and tilted his head, recognizing she had a point.

“I’m surprised you didn’t try to talk David into letting you go,” Connie said.

“I thought about it,” Harry sighed. “I feel like I should be there, but Dumbledore’s right. We need to stop the Dementors. If we don’t, either David has to pull his Aurors away from Azkaban, allowing the Death Eaters to escape, or he lets them kill thousands until we can round them up.”

“It’s a shitty situation,” Connie nodded. “You don’t think You-Know-Who knows we’re spying on him, do you?”

Harry sighed, running a hand through his hair.

“It’s possible,” he admitted. “If he does, now would be the time to use it against us. We really don’t have any other choice, though. We just have to hope for the best.”

“Hey! What are you kids doing!?”

Harry and Connie spun around as a man in referee’s robes flew up to them.

"If you wanna watch the match, go buy a ticket!" he yelled sternly. "Now get out of here before I call the Aurors."

Harry snorted, angering the man, while Connie reached into her pocket and pulled out her badge.

"They're already here," she said.

"Oh, er... my apologies, miss," the man stammered, looking abashed.

"Quite alright," Connie smiled.

"Is something wrong?" he asked, looking from her to Harry.

"We got a tip that a wanted criminal might be around here," Connie said. "Tell your security to keep it quiet, but we may need to evacuate the stadium."

"We can't!" the man exclaimed. "What about the game?"

"That's for you to figure out," she told him. "My job is to make sure no one gets killed."

"Oh, er, yes, yes. Of course," the referee stammered, flushing under her penetrating gaze. "I'll let them know at once."

Turning tail, he shot back down to the pitch.

"I really don't like this," Harry sighed.

“Neither do I,” Connie agreed. “But if we evacuate them too soon-”

“Tom might figure out what we’re up to, I know,” Harry said frustratedly. “I still don’t like it.”

Reaching out, Connie took his hand in hers and squeezed.

The night was quiet, with the exception of loud, distant cheers and groans from the stadium as Harry and Connie flew high above. The minutes ticked by as they circled, waiting anxiously for any sign of Dementors. In the back of his mind, Harry constantly wondered what was happening at Azkaban and hoped they’d made the right decisions.

Five minutes before midnight, he spotted a silver spell streaking toward him. It stopped next to Connie, and Harry raced over to hear what message the unfamiliar Patronus was carrying.

“We felt the Dementors pass, but we never say them. I think they’re heading your way. We’re on our way to you now,” it said in a deep, male voice.

“Damn it!” Connie hissed. “I was hoping they’d go to a less populated area first.”

“It’s never that easy,” Harry told her.

Raising the Elder Wand, he shot a small ball of white light straight into the air. After a few hundred feet, it expanded rapidly and lit up the night sky. Looking out towards the sea, they saw a wall of fog creeping toward them. Leading it were Dementors as far as they could see. A thousand of them skimmed just above the surface, their writhing black cloaks fluttering above the waves and blocking the reflection of Harry’s bright light.

“Holy shit,” Connie breathed in shock.

“We need to get to the stadium. Now!” Harry barked.

Wheeling around, they shot back toward the pitch. As they entered the field, the crowd erupted in loud boos. Play was stopped, and the Quidditch players came in to land as the officials ran toward them. Connie didn't wait for them as she pressed her wand to her throat.

"Witches and Wizards, I'm Auror Connie Hammer," she said, her voice magically magnified as she held up her badge. On the hanging banners around the stadium, Harry could see her image projected onto them. "Dementors are approaching. We need everyone to evacuate in a calm and orderly fashion."

"What is this rubbish," one of the players asked, stomping forward angrily. "You can't just come in here and-"

Harry interrupted him by stepping up to him with a glare.

"There are a thousand Dementors heading this way," he hissed quietly. "If you want to try and play a game of Quidditch in that, be my guest."

"Harry!" Connie called urgently.

Looking over, he followed her gaze. The other Order members had arrived, but as they neared, multicolored streaks of magic streaked past them.

"They're here!" the man in the lead shouted. "The Death Eaters are here!"

"Shit!" one of the players cursed.

Harry looked over at the witch as she spun on the spot, then blinked and stared in horror.

"I can't Disapparate," she said in a panic.

“Stay calm,” Harry said.

As the air grew cold, he turned and looked to the sky.

“They’re coming.”

~

Lily sat in the corner of the common room, reading a book and trying to distract herself from the worry she felt over Harry. He’d sent a letter telling her, Narcissa, and Bellatrix that something serious had come up, but he couldn’t write down any of the details. His promises of being back in the morning and the reassurance that he’d be fine did nothing to soothe her nerves.

“Come on, get off the pitch,” Sirius complained loudly. “I was just about to win five Galleons.”

“You wish,” James replied. “There’s no way Stilman gets the Snitch before Berkley.”

Lily rolled her eyes and turned back to her book, reading the same line she’d read ten times before, when she heard something that caught her attention.

“It appears that one of the people that landed is an Auror, and unless I’m mistaken, the other looks like Harry Potter, the Hero of Hogsmeade,” the announcer said.

“That’s just not fair,” James whined. “Why does he get to sneak out to a Quidditch game?”

“Turn that up!” Lily barked, jumping out of her chair and walking closer.

James huffed petulantly while Remus reached over and turned up the volume.

“Dementors are approaching. We need everyone to evacuate in a calm and orderly fashion.” Connie’s voice said, echoing oddly in the background.

“Dementors?” the announcer asked skeptically. “There appears to be a disagreement on the field now. Harry Potter and Justin Lovely look like they might come to blows. I – wait, what’s this? Several more people have arrived on brooms. I see some spell fire, but I can’t tell who it’s coming from. I hope it’s not another riot... One of them is shouting something. It’s hard to make out what he’s saying from up here.”

“Lily?” Alice asked.

Lily gave a start before turning to look at her.

“Is everything okay?” Alice asked.

“I don’t know,” Lily replied. “Harry said something big was happening tonight, and now...”

“He probably didn’t want you knowing he skivved off to go see a Quidditch game,” James said.

“Great Merlin’s underpants!” the announcer yelled. “The Dementors are here! They just came over the top of the stadium like a wave! There’s hundreds of them. Harry Potter and the Aurors are casting Patronus Charms, and it looks like they’re holding. Potter’s Patronus is more powerful than I’ve ever seen before. I can practically feel it. The crowd’s beginning to panic! People are climbing over each other to get to the door!”

“Oh, Merlin,” Alice gasped.

Lily felt fear settle into her stomach like a ball of ice cold lead. The common room went silent around her as they all listened to the announcer. She felt someone rest their hand on her shoulder, but she couldn't look away from the Wireless to see who.

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Harry groaned under the strain of holding back hundreds of Dementors at once. The others tried to help, but they gave him little relief. While Harry's Patronus projected a dome protecting the entire stadium, the others could only guard a small area. Closing his eyes, he focused on the faces of his loved ones as the crowd began to shout and scream.

The faces of Lily, Narcissa, Bellatrix, Amanda, Sylvia, Connie, Hermione, and Sirius - they all flashed through his mind's eyes as he pushed everything he had into maintaining his shield.

"We need to stop people from trying to leave," Connie said. "They'll be Kissed if they do."

"Go," Harry said. "I can hold them."

"Are you sure?" Charlus asked, watching him closely.

"Yes. Go!" Harry yelled impatiently.

Connie kissed him on the cheek before she and the others left to help calm the crowd. They were doing a good job of it once people realized they were safer inside the stadium.

"If anyone here can cast a Patronus, please come down here and help!" Charlus said, his voice magically projected.

Sadly, only three people from the crowd joined, and one of them couldn't even cast a corporeal Patronus. His blob of mist floated lazily to the edge of Harry's shield, barely doing anything.

"I told Moody what's happening," Connie said, her hand resting comfortably on his back. "He'll send help as soon as he can."

Harry nodded, sweat dripping from his brow.

"How long can you keep this up?" she asked softly, her warm breath ghosting over his neck.

"As long as I need to," he replied.

"Harry," Connie said, her voice trembling with a mixture of emotions.

"A few minutes," Harry admitted. "Maybe a little longer."

"Would it help if it was smaller?" Charlus asked, approaching from behind. "We could move everyone onto the pitch."

"It's not the size that's a problem. It's the number of bloody Dementors," Harry said.

"I'm afraid there's not much we can do about them," Charlus said.

"Then what can we do?" Connie asked.

"We need to start getting people out of here," he replied. "We can start making Portkeys and-"

Charlus stopped, and all of them turned around at the sound of a loud bang. There was a pause before it happened again, and the thick, golden gate blocking the entrance rattled.

“Wands ready!” Connie shouted.

“Is it Dementors?” a witch from the Order asked worriedly.

“No,” Charlus told her. “They can’t get through the shield.”

“Death Eaters?” Connie asked.

Charlus nodded solemnly.

“I can’t fight,” Harry said softly. “Not without dropping my Patronus.”

“We’ll protect you,” Connie said determinedly.

Bang!

“Indeed we will,” Charlus said, squaring his shoulder.

The rest of the Order stepped forward, wand at the ready.

Bang!

Everyone shifted on their feet as they waited for the cracked wooden gate to give way, wondering what was waiting for them on the other side.

Boom!

The gate splintered as it exploded inwards. Flicking her wand, Connie stopped the shards of wood in their tracks as a dozen robed and masked Death Eaters streamed in. As they began to fire spells, she hurled the splinters like spears. Most were shielded easily, but one got through, impaling itself in a Death Eater's shoulder.

Harry's view of the fight was limited as he stood at the back, wand raised helplessly to the sky. He so badly wanted to fight, to protect everyone there, but he knew he couldn't. This time, he was the one that needed protecting.

~

"Oh no. Death Eaters just broke through the gate," the announcer said, his voice filling the silent common room. "The Aurors are fighting back, spells clashing in the middle of the pitch. A few of the Quidditch players have joined in, as well. Oh! Oh, Merlin, no. Julia Ryan, Chaser for the Wimbourne Wasps, was just cut down by one of the Death Eaters. What a horrific tragedy! A promising career cut short by these heartless monsters!"

Lily heard a sob behind her but didn't dare look back, fearing that she might start to cry, too.

"Great Scott!" the announcer shouted. "Harry Potter just impaled the Death Eater with a broom. The handle's protruding right through his chest! Oh no. Wait! Yes, okay. The shield flickered for a moment, but it looks to be holding now. It appears that Potter needs his full concentration to hold it, and taking even a moment to avenge Julia Ryan caused it to falter. And it seems the Death Eaters recognized that as well. Nice Dodge by Potter as he ducks under a curse. Their all aiming for him now, and the Aurors are doing their best to stop them. I pray more Aurors arrive soon. I don't know how much longer they can keep this up."

"I'm sure more Aurors will be there any second," Dorcas said, taking a seat next to Lily.

"She's right," Marlene added, rubbing Lily's shoulder. "Professor Hammer is there, too. She'll make sure nothing happens to him."

Lily nodded silently, her heart in her throat.

“Ooh, Potter just took a bad Cutting Curse to the left shoulder,” the announcer continued. “He just couldn’t quite get out of the way in time. And it looks like – yes, I believe it is – Charlus Potter, owner of the Pride of Portree, is coming to his aide.”

“What the hell is my dad doing there?” James asked, surprised.

“Maybe he was at the game?” Sirius asked. “Relax, no Death Eater is going to get the best of your dad. He was an Auror, remember?”

“Yeah,” James said softly. “Yeah, you’re right.”

Despite how much she didn’t like James, Lily felt sympathy for him. A memory tickled at the back of her mind, a memory of Harry telling her that his grandparents had died before he was born. She couldn’t help but wonder if...

No, she thought furiously. No, they’ll be fine. Both of them will be just fine.

~

Harry waved his hand, wandlessly throwing a bench in front of a Killing Curse aimed at him. His shoulder stung painfully as the bench shattered from the impact, flaming splinters scattering on the ruined pitch. His eyes once again fell on the young woman on the ground, her eyes staring at him, open and lifeless.

Turning away and keeping an eye out for more curses coming his way, he fought down the anger welling inside him. While that was a good emotion to use in a duel, it was completely antithetical to the Patronus Charm. No matter how much he wished to rage and fight, he kept his mind focused on more pleasant thoughts.

Sidestepping a spear tiredly, Harry tried his best to keep the memory of his Christmas with Lily at the forefront of his mind. A bead of sweat rolled down his neck and under his shirt as he pictured her bright, smiling face.

Harry dodged out of the way of a writhing, spitting, red curse, but lost his balance on one of the many furrows cut into the normally immaculate lawn. Suddenly, he felt a searing pain in his hip. It was so intense he couldn't stop but scream in pain as his leg collapsed under him. As he fell to the ground, he felt something shift under the skin that wasn't supposed to. He was certain something was broken.

Trying to get to his feet, he cast a powerful Numbing Charm to dull the pain. Even with that, he still put all of his weight on his good leg. The Patronus-driven shield flickered precariously overhead, and Harry fought to calm himself and get it back under control.

After a few tense seconds, the shield stopped flickering and held strong.

"Protect Harry at all costs!" Connie shouted. "If that shield goes down, we're all as good as dead!"

The Order circled closer around him, their faces grim and covered in dirt and sweat. The Death Eaters surged, a cascade of Curses and Hexes spitting from their wands. Harry used as much wandless magic as he dared, blocking spells and throwing benches. Still, the Death Eaters pressed forward.

"AHH!" One of the Death Eaters screamed, falling to his knees.

A woman in the stands stood, the tip of her wand smoking from the Cutting Curse she'd just cast. She stared wide eyed at the wizard bleeding on the ground, shocked at her own action.

A heartbeat later, the man next to her stood and fired his own curse down at the Death Eaters. Then another stood. Then another. Then two more.

Soon, the Death Eaters were fighting on two fronts. They struggled to block the spells fired at their backs from the crowd while trying to press the Order in front of them. Their divided attention started to cost them, and two more of their number dropped to the ground.

“Bombarda!” A Death Eater snarled, his wand aimed at the crowd.

Several people dove out of the way as the stands exploded violently. Screams of fear and pain rent the air. Wands lowered, and they began to retreat deeper into the stands. Harry felt his heart sink as the Death Eaters turned their full attention back to him and the Aurors.

“Cowards!” Connie spat.

Harry’s hand trembled from the exertion of holding his Patronus for so long. As a thousand Dementors continued to press in on it, the Death Eaters fought even harder, fueled by their anger.

Suddenly, Daedalus threw himself to the ground, and Harry saw a brief glimpse of a red, sizzling, Piercing Hex before it slammed into his stomach. Hobbling on his one good leg to keep his balance, he pressed his hand to the wound and hissed. When he looked down, he saw crimson blood trickling from between his fingers.

Everything around him seemed to slow down as he watched the Order fight on, and a sense of hopelessness filled him. For just a moment, he thought about dropping his Patronus to fight. At least then, he could save a few lives. But looking out over the crowd, he couldn’t bring himself to let them die. Men, women, and children all stared down at him, watching fearfully as their fate was determined.

No, Harry thought, pushing more magic into the shield protecting them. He’d protect them for as long as he could.

One of the Death Eaters knocked an Order member to the ground before turning his wand on Connie. Her back was to him, fighting another masked figure. Harry did the only thing he had the strength left to do.

Prongs charged forward, causing the Death Eater to cower as the spectral stag leapt at him. A moment later, the Death Eater took a Bludgeoning Hex to the side of the head, courtesy of Charlus.

“Look!” Someone shouted from the crowd.

Harry glanced over and spotted something glowing silver outside of his shield. The lights writhed and danced, scattering the Dementors. The Patronuses pushed enough of them back to create a small hole. One just big enough for five figures to squeeze through on their brooms.

“Aurors!” One of the Death Eaters shouted.

Harry felt a swell of hope as Moody, Kingsley, Elizabeth, Greyson, and Jenna swooped toward them. Violent, destructive magic shot from their wands, exploding around the Death Eaters. Several were thrown into the air while the rest backed up rapidly.

“Retreat!” one of them yelled.

The words barely left his lips before Moody had him stunned and bound. Greyson and Jenna landed gracefully, their wands moving furiously as they attacked the fallen Death Eaters before they could get to their feet. The exhausted Order pushed back, rallied by the arrival of the Aurors.

In short order, the Death Eaters were overrun.

“Harry!” Connie shouted, her eyes going wide as she got her first good look at him since the fighting started.

Rushing over to him, she gingerly helped to support his weight. Harry hissed, his shoulder throbbing in protest as he wrapped it around her shoulders.

“We need to get rid of these Dementors,” he said shakily, his wand trembling.

“We’ll help you push ‘em back,” Moody said.

“No!” Harry said sharply. “If we chase them off, they’ll just go someplace else.”

“You have something better in mind?” Moody asked.

“I think so,” Harry said, licking his dry lips. “I just need you to hold them off for a minute.”

Moody stared at him intently before looking up at the sea of Dementors pushing against the shield protecting them.

“And if this plan of yours doesn’t work?” he asked.

“Then we chase them off and spend the next several months hunting them down,” Harry said, wincing as Connie shifted her grip.

With a grunt, Moody nodded.

“Well, you heard the lad,” he yelled. “Let’s send these bastards back to where they belong.”

As one, the Order members and Aurors raised their wands and cast the Patronus Charm. Once they were in place, Harry cautiously relaxed his magic. The shield faded, but Prongs remained, joining the other Patronuses in holding back the horde of Dementors.

“Hurry up, Potter,” Moody growled. “We can’t hold this for long.”

Nodding, Harry took a deep breath. Ignoring the pain in his stomach, he raised his wand, allowing all of his anger and rage to fill him.

“Inmorti Flumen,” he hissed.

A bolt of purple flames rocketed from his wand and impacted the chest of a Dementor. Instantly, it, and several around it, burst into flames. An unholy, high pitched shriek filled the stadium, forcing many to cover their ears. The remaining Dementors stilled as several of their number fluttered to the ground in an uncontrolled fall, their robes consumed with hungry violet flames

Daedelus squeaked and jumped out of the way as one landed a couple of feet from him, its skeletal hand reaching out to claw at the ground. With a final, unnatural wail, it collapsed motionless and burned to dust.

Looking up at the Dementors with a glare, Harry brought his wand to his throat.

“You will return to Azkaban and never again leave its shores, or I will hunt down and destroy every last Dementor on the face of the Earth,” he snarled. “Do you understand?”

There was a moment of silence before the Dementors stopped pushing against the Patronuses and floated back slightly.

“Good,” Harry said, building up his magic. “Now, go. Expecto Patronum!”

Prongs leapt from his wand along with a swirling silver dome. The Dementors screeched as they turned and fled. Prongs followed after them, chasing them out to sea. Letting out a breath he didn’t know he was holding, Harry dropped his arm to his side and sagged.

“Harry?” Connie asked worriedly, struggling under his weight.

“I think I need to sit,” he said as Charlus helped her lower him to the ground.

Exhaustion overcame him, and he struggled to hear what was being said as everyone began talking around him.

“I didn’t even know that was possible.”

“It’s not... directly killed a Dementor before.”

“... dark magic, was it?”

“Who gives a shit.... be alive.”

“... need to tear down the wards... get Potter to the Hospital Wing...”

“What happened at Azkaban?” Harry asked, his eyes drooping.

“Long story shot, we stopped most of them from escaping,” Moody said. “A few made it out when some Aurors showed their true colors, but no one important.”

“Greyback drowned when the boat some of the prisoners stole sank,” Jenna told him. “Turns out, swimming with only one arm and no legs is harder than it looks.”

Harry snorted, then immediately regretted it when his stomach hurt badly enough to bring tears to his eyes.

“I’ll give you the details later,” Charlus said. Handing him a chunk of wood. “This will take you to the manor. Dorea used to be a healer. She’ll fix you right up. Let her know I’m fine, but it’ll be a while before I’m home.”

Harry nodded, too tired to speak.

“Someone needs to go with him,” Charlus said. “He’s liable to break something else in this state.”

“I’ll go,” Connie volunteered.

Crouching down next to Harry, she placed a hand over his, her finger touching the wood.

“Don’t you go dying on me, lad,” Moody told him.

“You’re not getting rid of me that easily,” Harry said, his smile turning into a grimace.

Charlus bent down and tapped his wand on the piece of wood. It glowed blue before he felt a familiar tug behind the navel. Connie held onto him gently but firmly as they spun through a swirl of colors. Her wand snapped out as the trip came to an end, slowing their fall so that Harry landed lightly on his back.

“What happened?” Dorea asked as she walked over briskly.

Kneeling down, she waved her wand over Harry in familiar patterns.

“I don’t know, exactly,” Connie said.

“Go grab my black bag from the kitchen table,” Dorea said sharply. “I need the Blood Replenishing potion. The blue vial. Quickly.”

As Connie raced to do as she asked. Harry looked up at his grandmother’s worried face. Lifting her hand, she stroked it through his hair softly. His eyes closed at the comforting gesture, and he finally allowed himself to rest.

~

It was well into the early hours of the morning before the common room started to empty.

“I’m sure they’re fine,” James said.

Lily looked over to find him staring into the fire. Only then did she realize only a handful of students were still up. Marlene and Alice had insisted on staying with her, but both of them had fallen asleep. Marlene was snoring on the couch while Alice was curled up in Frank’s lap. In another corner, she spotted Molly and Arthur resting against each other. The sight made her long to feel Harry’s arms around her.

“I’m sure they would’ve said something if your dad was hurt,” Lily said softly.

The words felt like ash in her mouth. While his father was almost certainly fine, she knew Harry wasn’t. The announcer had made that extremely clear.

“Right,” James said, his leg bouncing furiously as he turned to look at her. “You’re right. And I’m sure Harry is fine, too. I mean, I know he’s a bit banged up, but-”

James broke off as the door to the common room opened. Lily’s heart leapt hopefully, then plummeted into her stomach like a rock when she saw Professor McGonagall walk in.

“What are all of you still doing up?” she asked, though lacking her usual disapproving tone.

“We heard about the Dementor attack on the Wireless,” James said. “The announcer described everything. Have you – have you heard anything about my dad?”

McGonagall looked at him sympathetically.

“Your father is just fine, Mr. Potter,” she told him. “Harry was injured quite badly, but he’s expected to make a full recovery.”

Lily sighed in relief and clung to Marlene as her friend hugged her.

“What you may not know from the Wireless is that while the Dementors attacked the stadium, You-Know-Who was attempting to liberate his followers from Azkaban,” Professor McGonagall said, eliciting gasps from the small group. “If it wasn’t for your father and Harry Potter, the Ministry may not have had enough Aurors to repel the attack.”

“Can I see him?” Lily asked hopefully.

“I’m sorry, Ms. Evans,” McGonagall said. “Mr. Potter isn’t here. He’s currently being tended to by James’ mother, Dorea. It was actually her that asked me to inform you of his condition. She expects that he’ll be well enough to be transferred to the Hospital Wing tomorrow.”

Lily nodded disappointedly. As relieved as she was to hear he was going to be alright, she wished she could see him for herself. Reaching out, Professor McGonagall patted her shoulder comfortingly.

“I can assure you, Mrs. Potter is a very talented Healer,” she said. “Mr. Potter will be just fine.”

“Thanks, professor,” Lily said, stifling a yawn.

“Try to get some rest,” McGonagall said. “I’ll let you know when to expect him back in the castle as soon as I know something.”

“Has someone told Narcissa and Bellatrix?” Lily asked.

“Professor Slughorn is telling them now,” McGonagall smiled. “Mrs. Potter was quite insistent that the three of you be told.”

Lily nodded, grateful but curious why Mrs. Potter felt that way.

Did Harry tell her anything, she wondered.

Shaking off the thought for the moment, she thanked Professor McGonagall again before heading toward the stairs.

“You okay, Lily?” Marlene asked as they climbed the stairs.

“Yeah,” Lily said tiredly. “I feel better now, knowing he’s okay. I just wish I could see him, you know?”

“I know,” Marlene said, pulling her into a hug. “Do you want to share a bed with me tonight?”

“I’d like that,” Lily smiled.

Walking into their dorm, they quickly changed into their pajamas and climbed into Lily’s bed. Laying on their sides facing each other, Marlene smiled. They both giggled softly before closing their eyes and getting some much needed sleep.