

Chapter 9

Just a couple of days before the kids were set to return to school, Marlene and Jenna flooded home to pick up a few things they needed. While they were gone, Sirius, Andi, and Ted called Harry and Dora into the kitchen.

“What is this?” Dora asked. “Some kind of intervention. Harry hasn’t started huffing broom polish, has he?”

Harry rolled his eyes and poked her in the side as they took seats at the table.

“No, nothing like that,” Sirius said, looking uncharacteristically, well, serious. “I want to know what you two think about Marlene and Jenna moving in with us.”

Harry and Dora turned to look at each other and blinked.

“Five Galleons says she’s pregnant,” Harry said.

“You’re on,” Dora agreed, shaking his hand.

Ted covered his mouth and snorted while Sirius sputtered.

“She’s not pregnant!” he exclaimed.

“She’s not,” Andi agreed. “I checked.”

“Damn,” Harry muttered.

Pulling five Galleons out of his pocket, he handed them to a smirking Dora.

“Can you two take this seriously for one minute?” Sirius asked exasperatedly.

Harry and Dora turned to look at each other and grinned.

“No,” they replied in unison.

Sirius threw his hands in the air frustratedly while Ted and Andi laughed.

“You know this is your own fault, don’t you?” Andi asked with a smirk.

Groaning, Sirius dropped his head onto the table with a dull *thud*.

“I know,” he muttered pitifully.

“I take it by your lack of protest that neither of you mind Marlene or Jenna moving in with us?” Ted asked.

“Course not,” Dora said.

“Not at all,” Harry grinned.

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The rest of the school year passed quietly, for the most part. Dora panicked slightly with her LAMPS coming up at the end of the year, but with help from her friends and Harry, she was more than prepared by the time they came around.

After heading home for the Summer, Harry and Dora started training in earnest for the upcoming U-21 International Dueling Tournament. Surprisingly, it was being held in the same place as it had been the year before.

“America gives the Tournament the most funding, so they get to choose the location,” Andi explained when Harry asked curiously. “It’s been held here since the nineteen-fifties. It doesn’t get nearly as much international support as the World Dueling Tournament.”

“It really is a shame,” Ted added. “You’d think with how big the World Dueling Tournament is, there’d be more interest in up-and-coming talent.”

Getting in line to sign up for the Tournament, Harry smirked when he watched Sirius’ eye follow a stunning blonde who looked to be there with her equally stunning daughter. Rolling her eyes, Marlene elbowed him in the ribs.

“What!?” he hissed. “They’re Veela! I can’t help it!”

“I don’t mind you looking, but the drooling is a bit much,” Marlene smirked.

Harry and Dora laughed as Sirius raised his hand to his mouth. When he didn’t find any drool, he huffed good-naturedly and crossed his arms. When the people in front of them moved out of the way, Harry and Dora moved up to sign in.

“Sirius, look! There’s Filius!” Marlene said excitedly.

Harry looked over and spotted the diminutive man talking to Professor Wilkinson near the entrance to the dueling tent. As a group, they walked over and greeted the two men happily.

“Hello everyone, it’s lovely to see you again,” Flitwick said happily.

As Marlene bent over to hug him, Harry unashamedly gazed at her bum. Scowling, Sirius smacked his arm lightly.

“What?” Harry asked, shrugging his shoulders defensively.

“Will you stop checking out my girlfriend?” Sirius asked.

“It’s not my fault you bagged a hot one,” Harry said.

“Oh, stop it,” Marlene said, wrapping her arm around his waist. “If you’re allowed to look, then so is Harry.”

“I feel like I’ve just taken a Time-Turner back to the seventies,” Flitwick chuckled. “I remember you and James having many a similar argument at Hogwarts.”

“Oh no, James had nothing on Harry,” Marlene smiled. “James caused trouble. Harry causes international incidents.”

“That was only once,” Harry said defensively.

“I’d love to hear that story,” Flitwick grinned. “The Potters are known for being quite the handful. Minerva has told me some quite thrilling tales about your grandfather. Tell me, Boris, how do you deal with it?”

“I just try to direct his energy into something productive,” Professor Wilkinson smiled. “It’s certainly a challenge at times.”

“Oh, have we got some stories to tell you,” Sirius grinned.

Harry sighed, knowing it was pointless to try and stop his Godfather. He'd spent far too long teasing him about Marlene to gain any leniency. Rather than stick around to listen to them laugh at his expense, Harry took Dora and Jenna to explore the fair. For a couple of hours, they went on rides, played games, and even managed to win a few prizes. He found he was quite good at a game where you had to banish small, red rubber rings onto a wooden dowel a few feet away.

Dora and Jenna were both clutching stuffed Hippogriffs by the time they left for the safety briefing. Afterward, they met the adults in the stands to watch the first matches get underway. Harry's first match was the third of the day and pitted him against an Armenian witch with an affinity for the Bludgeoning Hex. After bocking it just a couple of times, his arm began to ache. Fortunately, he was able to end the match quickly after that. His ability to cast silently still offered him an insurmountable advantage.

"You won't always be able to beat your opponents so easily," Professor Wilkinson warned when he rejoined them in the stands. "I wish I'd been able to come last year. I'd have asked them to move you up to the under-eighteen bracket if I knew it was this easy for you."

"Why didn't you come last year?" Andi asked curiously.

"My sister was ill," Professor Wilkinson replied before turning back to Harry. "Next year, we need to focus on technique and expanding your spell knowledge. It won't matter if you can cast silently if your opponent uses a spell you're unfamiliar with."

"Very true," Flitwick nodded. "I once dueled an Egyptian wizard in the semi-finals that nearly beat me because he used an obscure spell. It was only my intensive study of Charms that allowed me to deduce what the spell did and figure out a way to counter it."

Dora left a few moments later to get ready for her first match. Her opponent was a German wizard who had placed well the year before but whom she hadn't faced. It was clear from the outset that he outclassed her right from the beginning. Dora was forced to dodge, dive, and shield furiously just to stay in the match.

“Oh no,” Andi sighed. “She’s going to be so disappointed if she loses her first match.”

“It’s not over yet,” Flitwick smiled. “Look, he’s starting to tire.”

Harry watched closely as the German wizard slowed his intense pace, sweat dripping from his brow as he panted for air.

“He got too overconfident,” Flitwick pointed out. “He thought he could finish her quickly and used up too much of his energy. A rookie mistake, but one every duelist makes in their career.”

The German wizard continued to slow, his movements becoming gradually more sluggish, giving Dora a chance to fight back. While she was physically tired, her magic was as strong as ever. When she let out a barrage of Hexes and Curses, the German barely had the strength left to raise a shield. It took three spells before finally failing. Dora’s follow-up spells plowed through, leaving him tied up, tongue-tied, and petrified before he even hit the ground.

Grinning, Harry jumped to his feet and cheered, competing with Sirius to see who could be the loudest. Dora was ecstatic to have won, jumping up and down with a grin as her hand was raised.

“That was amazing,” Harry said, hugging her tightly when she joined them in the stands.

“I can’t believe I won,” Dora grinned. “He came in third last year, and I didn’t even make the top eight.”

“Wonderfully done, Ms. Tonks,” Flitwick smiled. “Never underestimate sheer determination. Even when facing a superior opponent, victory is always attainable if you want it bad enough.”

“I might just have two champions this year,” Professor Wilkinson grinned.

“Don’t get used to it,” Flitwick chuckled. “I may have a student of my own entering next year.”

“Really?” Marlene asked. “Who?”

“Ah, that, my dear, will have to be a surprise,” he smiled.

Harry and Dora had two more matches, both of which they won before the Tournament broke for lunch. As they ate, the Veela mother and daughter walked past, once again distracting Sirius.

“I see you’ve taken an interest in the French competition,” Flitwick joked.

“More like the French opponent's mother,” Marlene smiled, shaking her head.

“Do you know them?” Andi asked.

“Only in passing,” Flitwick replied. “Fleur Delacour is one of Beauxbatons’ most promising students.”

“Delacour?” Sirius asked. “I feel like I’ve heard that name before.”

Harry smirked and opened his mouth to speak, only to receive a kick in the shin from his Godfather. Dora snickered as he grunted and rubbed his leg under the table.

“Her parents, Apolline and Martin Delacour own one of the largest wineries in the Magical world,” Flitwick told him. “I’m afraid I don’t know much about her dueling outside of what we’ve seen today. I believe this is her first year competing.”

“She wasn’t here last year,” Dora said. “Sirius would’ve definitely noticed if she was.”

“Hey!” Sirius protested.

Smiling, Marlene patted his arm consolingly.

“If you’re done making fun of Sirius, we should get back to the Tournament,” Andi said, standing up.

“I need to go to the bathroom first,” Marlene said.

“Me too,” Harry added.

“We’ll meet you back in the tent,” Sirius said, kissing Marlene’s cheek.

Harry and Marlene stood and made their way down a small dirt path. At the end sat two large tents that housed the bathrooms. As Harry turned to go into the Men’s room, he glanced over and noticed two men approaching Marlene from behind. They met her between the two tents, and he caught a flash of red before he saw her body go limp. Harry’s adrenaline started to race as he drew his wand.

“Hey!” he shouted, chasing after them.

The men ignored him, continuing to drag Marlene between the tents and out of view. Harry pushed his way through the crowd, bumping into a man as he rounded the corner. He never saw the man raise his wand before his world went black.

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“Harry,” a voice hissed.

Someone was shaking him awake. Groggily, Harry blinked his eyes open and rolled over onto his back. He was in a small, dark basement with only a tiny window letting in light. Bars like a prison cell surrounded him, causing a moment of panic. Sitting up, he looked at Marlene's pale, worried face as he remembered what had led up to him being there.

"What happened?" he asked, getting to his feet. "Where are we?"

"I don't know," Marlene said, rubbing her arms. "I just woke up. The last thing I remember is going to the bathroom. Someone grabbed my arm, and then I woke up here."

"Yeah," Harry said, nodding his head. "Two men came up behind you and stunned you. I tried to stop them, but I guess there was more. I never even saw who stunned me."

Suddenly, a door opened, and they heard footsteps coming down the stairs. A moment later, a dark-haired, bearded man reached the bottom and smiled at them with yellowed, crooked teeth.

"Ah, you're awake," he said.

Harry immediately took note of the man's British accent.

"What do you want?" Marlene asked.

"Nothin' you can give me," the man said.

Reaching up to a shelf along the wall, he pulled down a silver goblet. Harry's heart leapt when he noticed his and Marlene's wand sitting next to it. With a flick of his wand, he filled the goblet with water and handed it to Marlene.

"I don't know what you did to piss off Nott, but he's payin' us a lot of gold to bring you to him," the man chuckled.

"Nott?" Marlene gasped, her eyes going wide and her face losing what little color it had.

"Whatever he's paying you, I'll double it if you let us go," Harry offered.

The man chuckled and shook his head.

"It's more than my life's worth to let you go," he said. "Besides, Nott's going to have to double his price once he finds out we have the girl *and* the Boy-Who-Lived. Just sit tight. You two aren't going anywhere."

"Wait!" Harry yelled as the man turned back towards the stairs and walked away. "A hundred thousand Galleons!"

The man paused halfway up the stairs and turned to him with a thoughtful look.

"Tempting," he said, cocking his head. "But still not worth it."

Harry's heart sank as the man continued up the stairs and closed the door. The lock sounded abnormally loud as it clicked into place.

"I can't believe he found me," Marlene muttered, sinking to the floor. "I'm so sorry, Harry."

"We can still get out of this," Harry said, his desperation building. "Our wands are right there on that shelf."

"How do we reach them?" Marlene asked dejectedly.

Harry didn't reply. Licking his lips, he reached his arm through the bars as far as he could and focused with all his might on calling his wand to him. After watching Dora duel that witch last year that didn't use a wand, he'd taken to reading up on the subject in his spare time. He knew the theory behind it, but he'd yet to actually try it himself.

Panic welled up inside of him as the seconds ticked by, and nothing happened. Nott was going to kill him. Kill them both. And there was nothing he could do about it.

Harry slammed his fist painfully into one of the bars and closed his eyes. He knew he had to calm down and focus if he was going to get out of there. Taking two calming breaths, he rubbed his fingertips together and opened his eyes. He focused solely on his wand, the need to have it in his hand becoming an all-consuming thought.

"Come on," he whispered. "Come on."

The wand twitched. Another spike of adrenaline surged through Harry's system at the sight of his success. Focusing again, the wand twitched twice more before it rolled towards him and fell off of the shelf, landing on the cement floor a few feet away with a clatter.

Marlene gasped and looked to the stairs worriedly. Harry ignored his own fears and dropped to his knees as he continued to call the wand towards him. It trembled again and rolled across the floor as he reached out for it desperately.

Finally, he felt the wood touch his fingers, and he snatched it up off the floor, yanking it through the bars.

"You did it!" Marlene gasped quietly. "Can you unlock the door?"

Taking a deep breath to calm his racing heart, Harry nodded and aimed his wand at the lock.

“Alohomora,” he said.

The lock clicked open, and Marlene rushed forward to push open the door. The hinges squeaked loudly, causing both of them to freeze. They listened for the sound of running feet, but when none came, Marlene slipped through the gap and grabbed her wand from the shelf. Harry stepped outside of the cell and paused next to the stairs.

Slowly and carefully, he followed Marlene up to the top of the stairs, where they stopped and listened.

“You’re sure it’s him?” A deep male voice asked.

“Positive,” another man replied. “If you want both, it’s going to cost you triple.”

“Don’t be absurd. The boy’s not worth that much to me,” the first man replied. “I’ll give you an extra ten thousand.”

“For the Boy-Who-Lived?” a third voice scoffed.

Marlene backed away from the door and motioned for Harry to follow her as she crept back down the stairs.

“That’s Nott,” she said, pacing around as she fidgeted with her wand. “We either need to find another way out of here or try to ambush them as they come down the stairs.”

Looking back at Marlene, his eyes trailed over the other things in the basement. He’d been so focused on his wand that he hadn’t noticed until then that all of the potion ingredients were sitting on the shelf.

One of them, a pearly white powder, stuck out to him because of what he'd read about it in class.

Powdered Erumpent horn: Warning, extremely explosive. Handle with care.

"Check that window," Harry said, pointing behind her.

As she turned around, he took the bottle and cupped it in his hand. The window was high and small but looked big enough for them to squeeze through. Opened the window with her wand, Marlene looked outside.

"Can you give me a boost, and I'll levitate you from the other side?" she asked.

"Sure," Harry said.

Pocketing the Powdered Erumpent Horn, he stepped up beside her and bent down with his hands cupped. When she stepped on his palms, Harry lifted her up to the window and kept pushing as she crawled outside. While she squirmed to fit her curvy figure through the small gap, he stepped back and walked over to one of the beams supporting the floor above.

Harry took the Powdered Erumpent Horn out of his pocket and stuck it to the beam. Mentally, he thanked Sirius for teaching him pranking spells as he set a Delayed Explosive Charm on the glass bottle. It was a Charm designed to make a small bang to surprise or distract. In this case, Harry had a much bigger surprise in store for the people who tried to kidnap them.

"Harry!" Marlene hissed. "Come on! What are you doing?"

Stowing his wand in his pocket, Harry turned to the window. With a running leap, he grabbed the edge of the windowsill and pulled himself up. Marlene grabbed his wrists and pulled, hauling him through until they both spilled onto the grass.

"Let's go," Marlene whispered.

Harry followed her as they walked towards a road visible a short distance away. They were in a fairly rural area, but the yard was well maintained, and there were very few trees to use as cover.

"They're gone!" someone shouted from the house.

"Run!" Marlene said urgently.

She took off at a sprint, and Harry kept pace right behind her. Looking over his shoulder, he spotted one of the men from the Tournament wrenching the back door open. Harry skidded to a stop and grinned as he aimed his wand toward the house.

"Harry!" Marlene yelled, realizing he wasn't behind her.

"Defodio!" he yelled.

The explosion was bigger than Harry was expecting. All of the windows shattered, the frame rattled, and the first floor heaved upwards before collapsing into the basement. The man in the doorway stumbled backward and disappeared out of sight. Marlene and Harry watched, stunned, as the house creaked and groaned a moment before it collapsed.

"Holy shit," Harry laughed.

"Come on, we need to go," Marlene said, grabbing his wrist.

Together, they took off running for the road. When he heard wood cracking behind him, Harry slowed and turned around, a smile still on his face. The breath was knocked out of his lungs as a spell hit him in the stomach and threw him onto his back. Sucking in a breath, the first thing he

noticed was a worrying lack of pain. The second was the blood soaking through his shirt near his belly button.

Lifting his head, he saw a man with straw-colored hair marching toward him. His robes were torn and covered in white dust. With a scowl, his eyes gleaming maliciously, he strode across the lawn.

“Harry!” Marlene screamed.

She tried to run back to him, but in the few extra steps she’d taken, she had ended up outside the wards.

“No!” she yelled, trying to force her way through. “Nott, don’t you touch him! Take me! You can have me. Just let Harry go!”

Nott sneered at her. Raising his wand, Harry unleashed every curse and hex he could think of, but they were batted away like they were nothing.

“Crucio!” he shouted.

Harry screamed as the worst pain he’d ever experienced exploded through his body. Every inch of his skin felt like it was being stabbed over and over again by a thousand razor-sharp knives. It seemed to last hours before the curse was suddenly lifted. Harry barely had a moment to feel relief before his wand was ripped from his hand. Faintly, he could hear Marlene still screaming his name.

“Potter,” Nott growled, standing over him. “I’m going to enjoy killing you.”

Through his trembling from the curse and the fear surging through him, Harry spit on his robes.

“Go fuck yourself,” he panted.

“Just for that, I’m going to make that bitch scream before she dies,” Nott snarled.

Raising his wand, he aimed it at Harry’s heart.

“Avada Kedav-”

His incantation was interrupted by the sound of the Wards shattering. A black blur slammed into Nott’s chest and knocked him away so fast it looked like he’d vanished. Hearing a crash near the house, Harry lifted his head. Nott was pinned to a section of broken roof by a broom that protruded from his chest. Eyes wide and fearful, he gurgled as a thin line of blood leaked from the corner of his mouth. With a rattling gasp, he collapsed forward.

“Sirius!” Marlene shouted.

Harry tilted his head back and saw Sirius and Frank sprinting from the road.

“Marlene, are you alright?” Sirius asked worriedly.

“I’m fine, but Harry’s hurt,” she said, urging him to keep going.

“Don’t worry, Healers are on the way,” Sirius said, jogging over to Harry. “Frank, can you clear that house.”

“There’s two or three more inside,” Harry said, leaning back to stare up at the sky as his godfather knelt next to him.

“Merlin,” Sirius breathed as he looked him over. “I’m sorry, this is going to hurt, but I need to slow that bleeding.”

Waving his wand, he conjured white bandages that wrapped around Harry’s stomach.

“It doesn’t hurt,” Harry said, blinking back tears. “Sirius, I can’t feel my legs.”

Sirius froze, and Marlene gasped as she knelt down next to him and took his hand in hers.

“This is Agent Black. I need those fucking Healers now!” he barked into the badge on his lapel.

“It’s okay, Harry,” Marlene said, stroking his hair softly. “I’m sure they’ll be able to patch you up.”

Closing his eyes, Harry squeezed her hand as a tear slid down his cheek.