

## Chapter 11

Hermione held Harry's hand, her fingers interlaced with his, as he led her through the halls of Hogwarts. When they reached the Room of Requirement, she was surprised when he pushed open the door—not to the comfortable room he usually summoned but to a bright, sunny courtyard. A hundred little questions ran through her mind about how the room was able to produce something like this, but Hermione pushed them to the back of her mind.

She had much more important questions to ask, like why the headmaster had called him out of bed in the middle of the night. Biting her lip to stop the questions on the tip of her tongue, followed him over to a stone bench and sat down next to him. With a sigh, Harry stared off into the distance, his green eyes burning with troubled thoughts.

"I know you want to know what happened last night, but it's a bit of a long explanation," Harry said.

Hermione nodded, but he didn't seem to notice, so she squeezed his hand comfortingly.

"Voldemort didn't die the night he came to our house," he continued heavily. "His body was destroyed, but there was something anchoring him here."

Harry paused and took a deep breath. His eyes remained riveted straight ahead, almost like he was afraid to look at her.

"When you commit cold-blooded murder, it fractures the soul," he said, his tone nearly a whisper. "Dumbledore thinks that Voldemort had taken so many innocent, defenseless lives before he came to our home that his soul was like a puzzle ready to fall apart the moment you picked it up from the table. When his Killing Curse rebounded and destroyed his body, most of those pieces fled, looking for someplace safe to hide. Voldemort's terrified of death, you see."

Harry stopped again and turned to look at Hermione. His gaze seemed to penetrate her soul, pinning her in place.

“I need you to promise to keep this next part to yourself,” he said gravely. “No one can know about this.”

“I promise,” Hermione said.

Staring at her for a moment longer, Harry nodded, his eyes gazing down to his lap.

“One piece of his soul stayed behind and latched itself onto the closest living thing in the room,” he told her.

Pushing his bangs out of the way, he showed her the scar that made him famous all over the world. Hermione’s mouth fell open in horror as the bottom of her stomach dropped like she’d just fallen off a cliff. She tried to comfort him; assure him everything would be alright, but the words wouldn’t form. All she could do was cling to his hand like a lifeline.

“I’m the only thing that kept him alive,” Harry said, slowly turning his head until he was once again staring into the distance. “Everyone thought he was gone for good, but Dumbledore and my parents knew he wasn’t. He possessed Professor Quirell in first year to try and get the Philosopher’s Stone to bring himself back, but I managed to stop him. He tried again in second year when he used a cursed diary to release Slytherin’s Basilisk and tried to trick Ginny Weasley into performing a ritual that would have given him a new body. And then there was the Tournament. You remember fourth year when my name came out of the Goblet, and everyone thought I was just trying to show off?”

Hermione did remember. Even she had been angry at him for cheating. His name and face had been plastered all over the paper for months. At first, they’d called him a rebel and a cheater like the rest of his classmates, but when he started to win, they quickly changed their tune. No one wanted to vilify the youngest Triwizard Champion in history, especially when he was doing it while saving a fellow Champion and making the education at Hogwarts look so good.

“Well, I didn’t enter my name,” Harry continued. “We didn’t know who did until after it was over. When the trophy Portkeyed me away, and Dumbledore told everyone that it had been a

freak accident caused by haywire magic? Well, that was a lie. It took me straight to Peter Pettigrew, who had found Voldemort and was nursing him back to health.”

Hermione gasped and clutched his hand tightly in both of hers.

“We found out later that Barty Crouch Jr. wasn’t as dead as everyone thought. His mother, who was dying, took his place in Azkaban, and his father snuck him out. He spent years hiding him in his house under the Imperious Curse until he finally escaped. Crouch ran off to find Voldemort and found him with Pettigrew in Romania. They came up with a plan to give Voldemort back his body and came back to England. Pettigrew hid away with Voldemort and helped keep him alive while Crouch Imperioused his father, captured Alistair Moody, and used Polyjuice Potion to impersonate him. We were taught by a Death Eater for an entire year, and no one knew about it. Not even Dumbledore figured it out.”

Shaking his head, Harry hunched forward, his elbows coming to rest on his knees.

“Crouch was the one that put my name in the Goblet,” he said. “He did everything he could to help me win the Tournament so I would be the first to touch the Goblet, which he’d spelled into a Portkey. It took me to a graveyard where Voldemort’s father was buried. That bastard Pettigrew hit me from behind the second I landed. He tied me to a statue and used my blood in a ritual to give Voldemort his body back.”

Harry sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

“Why did he use your blood?” Hermione asked, wracking her brain for ways to help him.

“My Mum used ancient blood magic to protect me and my sister as soon as they realized Voldemort was after us,” Harry replied. “Using my blood in the ritual means that protection won’t work against him anymore.”

Hermione nodded but mentally added researching blood magic to her to-do list.

“Anyways, after he took my blood, he wanted to duel,” Harry said, letting out a short, bitter laugh. “I thought I was dead, but it turns out our wands are brothers. They share a core. A single tail feather from Fawkes. It saved my life. Our spells connected. I don’t really know how to explain it. Dumbledore said it was more like a battle of wills rather than magic, which is why I won. My desire to survive was more powerful than his desire to kill me, I guess. As soon as my spell hit his wand, all the ghosts of the people he’d killed came out of it. They bought me enough time to run to the Cup and get back to Hogwarts.

“I told Dumbledore and the Minister what had happened as soon as I got back, but Fudge refused to believe it,” Harry sighed. “That useless idiot takes too much money from Death Eaters like Lucius Malfoy to believe a word against them. Dumbledore didn’t want to start a fight with the Ministry, so he and my dad started warning people quietly. He even has a secret organization he runs, keeping tabs on Voldemort and his Death Eaters.”

“So, that’s what last night was about?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded. “Last night, Voldemort tried to kill Amelia Bones. She’s fine. My dad warned her this might happen, so she was prepared. She managed to kill a few before escaping. Fudge is trying to cover everything up, but Dumbledore leaked some stuff to the press. The Prophet isn’t covering it yet, but the international papers are.”

“That’s good, isn’t it?” Hermione asked encouragingly.

Harry shrugged, “It might help convince a few, but not enough to make a difference. My dad thinks maybe a third of the Wizengamot believe him and Dumbledore. They need more votes on their side before they go public, or they might lose their seats, and then they can’t help anyone. I know this is a lot to take in, and if it’s too dangerous for you-”

“How can I help?” Hermione interrupted.

Harry had told her there really wasn't much she could do, but Hermione refused to believe that. A week after her conversation with Harry, she slipped back into the Room of Requirement alone and used the Floo to call Lily. Surprisingly, she wasn't the least bit surprised Harry had let her in on his big secret.

"Honestly, since Tonks, Penny, and Fleur are part of the Order and already know, I would've been more surprised if he hadn't told you," Lily had admitted.

They'd talked for hours about the ancient blood magic Lily had rediscovered and used to protect her family. She even gave her the names of the books that she'd read about it in. Hermione was a little disappointed it wasn't in any long-lost ancient tome that Lily had found tucked away in a secret part of the school. Rather, the books were readily available in the library for anyone to check out, the magic inside being discarded as useless and outdated.

Hermione spent the next four months reading any books she could find on blood magic whenever she wasn't studying for her NEWTs. Harry had seen the books she was reading as they cuddled on the couch in their private room, but he never brought it up. She asked him a few questions about it, but he readily admitted that, while he'd read the books, it wasn't an area of magic he was talented at.

Which was why, on a warm, sunny day in early May, Hermione was excited to be going to Hogsmeade. This would be the first time since Christmas that she'd be able to meet up with Tonks, Penny, and Fleur at the same time. For the last few months, their schedules had conflicted, leaving at least one of them unable to meet them. Finally, she'd be able to bring up the subject and pick her friends' brains. She was sure that, between the four of them, they could come up with a solution.

Stepping out of the carriage with Harry and Heather, they made their way through the bustling village and to the Three Broomsticks. Just before they stepped inside, a barn owl landed on Harry's shoulder with a letter clutched in its beak.

"Hello," Harry said, stroking the bird's feathers before taking the letter and opening it. "It's from Sirius. He wants me to meet him down at the stile."

“Do you want us to go with you?” Heather asked.

“No, he probably just wants to try talking me into joining the Aurors again,” Harry sighed. “You go ahead. Tell the girls I’ll be along in a bit.”

“Alright,” Hermione said.

Wrapping her arms around his shoulder, she kissed him briefly before letting go. With a smile and a wave, Harry turned and walked down the road while Hermione and Heather entered the pub. The first thing they heard when they walked in was Tonks laughing loudly. Looking over, Hermione covered her mouth to hide a laugh as she watched Ronald Weasley gape at Fleur like he’d never seen a girl before. Lavender, his date, huffed angrily and stomped on his foot before marching out of the pub. The pain brought Ronald out of his daze, his ears going bright red as he raced after her.

“Hey, Hermione. Heather,” Tonks grinned while they took their seats at the table. “Enjoy the show?”

“Very much,” Hermione smiled.

“Where’s ‘Arry?” Fleur asked.

“Sirius asked him to meet him at the stile,” Heather replied.

“You’re kidding,” Tonks groaned. “I swear I’m going to hex that mutt as soon as I get back to the office.”

“He said he’d only be a few minutes,” Hermione said. “Let’s get a room and go upstairs. There’s something I wanted to talk to you about before he gets back.”

“Let me know what room you’re in, and I’ll tell Harry when he gets back,” Heather told her.

“Actually, I think you should come, too,” Hermione said.

Tonks grinned, “Kinky.”

“Talk. I said, talk,” Hermione said, rolling her eyes. “Get your mind out of the gutter.”

Standing, she walked over to the bar and asked Rosmerta for a room. After months of dating Harry, she’d gotten used to the woman’s knowing smiles and no longer blushed. By the time she’d paid for the room, the other girls had joined her and followed her up the stairs to room three. As she closed the door, Hermione turned and warded the room the best she could. That finally got Tonks to turn serious.

“What’s up, Hermione?” she asked, sitting on the end of the bed.

“You all know about the blood magic Lily used and what Harry’s scar means, right?” Hermione asked.

The other girls all shared looks and nodded their heads.

“Right,” she continued nervously. “I’ve been looking into both, but I haven’t found anything yet. I was wondering if any of you have found anything. I’ve only been looking for a few months.”

“That sort of magic really isn’t my strong suit,” Tonks admitted.

“Lily and I have been working on the blood magic for a couple of years now, but it doesn’t look like there’s a way to counter what Voldemort did,” Penny said. “The best we could come up with would be to destroy his body again and hope he doesn’t get Harry’s blood again. As for his scar, we’ve looked, but we haven’t found anything useful.”

"I looked zrough ze Veela archive in France," Fleur added. "We do not 'ave much on blood magic, 'oweveer we do 'ave books on soul magic zat are illegal in England. I 'ave looked zrough a few, but zere are steel many I 'ave not read yet."

"Is there any chance I could take a look at them?" Hermione asked hopefully.

Fleur nodded, "You would 'ave to come to France. Zey do not allow ze books to leave ze Enclave. Per'aps you could visit zis Summer?"

"Do they really not allow you to take the books out, or is that just an excuse to take Harry to France so you can show him off to all the other Veela?" Tonks asked teasingly.

Fleur turned to her and smirked while Hermione rolled her eyes.

"ALL STUDENTS AND HOGSMEADE RESIDENTS RETURN TO HOGWARTS IMMEDIATELY!"  
Dumbledore's voice boomed through the village.

Sharing a worried look with the others, Hermione jumped to her feet and raced over to the window.

"What the hell is going on?" Tonks asked, drawing her wand.

Gazing out of the window, Hermione saw students and residents all heading outside and looking around curiously. Nothing seemed out of place, but they slowly made their way to the castle.

"I don't see anything," Hermione said.

"Let's get back to the castle and find out what's going on," Tonks said, striding towards the door.



She left so quickly that the other girls had to rush to catch up to her. Hermione ran down the stairs, pushed her way past the patrons lazily making their way to the door, and burst through the door.

“ALL STUDENTS AND HOGSMEADE RESIDENTS RETURN TO HOGWARTS!” Dumbledore’s voice boomed again. “DEATH EATERS ARE COMING!”

“Shit!” Tonks cursed.

She came to a dead stop so suddenly that Hermione nearly crashed into her. Students and residents walked past them quickly, but apparently, they weren’t moving fast enough for Tonks.

“You heard Dumbledore, move your arse!” Tonks shouted. “Run! Get out of here!”

Hermione, along with Penny and Fleur, joined her in encouraging people to move faster. As the flood of people fleeing to the castle turned from a flood into a trickle, and she still didn’t see Harry, Hermione began to worry. Seeing the last of the residents evacuate the village, luggage in hand, she was just about to go and look for him when Professors McGonagall, Vector, and Sinistra came jogging down the road.

“Ms. Tonks, is everyone out of the village?” Professor McGonagall asked.

Tonks turned and cast a Revealing Charm. A transparent blue wave of magic flowed seamlessly over the buildings.

“Yes, ma’am,” she replied.

“Professor, we haven’t seen Harry,” Hermione said.

“He’s not here, Ms. Granger,” Professor McGonagall said. “Come. We need to get back to the castle quickly.”

Hermione bit her lip and looked back over her shoulder at the stile worriedly before turning back and following Professor McGonagall to the carriages. Just a moment after climbing aboard the last one, they heard a loud explosion in the distance. A massive pillar of fire could be seen from the end of the village, where Madam Puddifoot’s sat. As the carriage climbed the hill towards the front gate, Hermione could make out dozens of figures in white masks and black cloaks scurrying through Hogsmeade, attacking every building in sight.

When they arrived, Dumbledore stood just in front of the main gate, looking out over the village with a sad expression. Behind him, just beyond the gate, stood teachers, Aurors, and a number of other people, only some of whom Hermione recognized. Among those were the Potters.

“Is that everyone, Argus?” Dumbledore asked.

Filch checked the list of students that had gone to Hogsmeade and then nodded.

“All but one, headmaster,” he replied.

Hermione felt a sinking feeling in her stomach as Dumbledore nodded gravely. Sharing a look with the other girls, she could tell from the looks on their faces that they felt the same way.

“Very well,” Dumbledore said.

Closing his eyes, he raised his wand high above his head. Slowly, he brought the wand down while muttering under his breath. Hermione could feel the magic cracking in the air as the famous Hogwarts wards were brought to bear. Starting at a point high above the castle, an enormous, pearlescent dome descended until it touched the ground, sealing Hogwarts away from the rest of the world.

“Professor, where’s Harry?” Hermione asked.

“Perhaps we should take this inside,” the headmaster replied.

“Mum?” Heather asked tumultuously.

Lily blinked back tears and turned to look at James. Taking her hand in his, he gave it a supportive squeeze before nodded.

“Harry’s been kidnapped,” Lily said, her voice trembling with emotion.

With a gasp, Heather hugged her mother tightly as both of them cried silently.

“How?” Hermione asked, her voice cracking as she fought back her own tears. “Are you sure?”

“We are certain,” Dumbledore said heavily. “The information comes from a very reliable source. As for how – perhaps you could tell us. When was the last time you saw him?”

“We – we were just about to go into the Three Broomsticks when an owl delivered a letter from Sirius asking Harry to meet him at the stile,” Hermione said.

Looking around, Hermione’s heart sank when she spotted Sirius just behind James, killing any hope that this might be some kind of mistake.

“Wormtail,” James growled. “He was always forging letters when we were at school.”

“We’ll get him back, James,” Sirius said, patting him on the shoulder.

“Albus,” Professor McGonagall called, looking over his shoulder.

Hermione followed her line of sight and gasped when she saw hundreds of black-cloaked Death Eaters marching from Hogsmeade toward the castle. Hearing a noise behind her, she looked over her shoulder and saw students pouring out onto the front lawn. Neville Longbottom was at the front with a determined expression on his face, and his wand gripped tightly in his hand. It took her a moment to realize only the older students were coming outside. Hermione imagined the professors were keeping the younger students someplace safe.

As she turned back to watch the Death Eaters approach, she spotted a man with no hair, pale skin, and bright red eyes at the front. Hermione knew without a doubt that he had to be Voldemort. And just behind him, with his hands bound behind his back and being pushed by a woman with wild black hair and gleaming violet eyes, was Harry. James, Lily, and Sirius rushed past Hermione and stopped just at the edge of the wards to get a better look. She followed nervously a moment later, slipping in beside Heather, who gripped her hand tightly.

Voldemort stopped just short of the wards, his red eyes gleaming with sinister delight as he smirked at them.

“Lower the wards and surrender, or the Boy-Who-Lived... dies.”