

Chapter 38

For the first time since the start of Summer, Harry woke to an empty bed. Stretching out on the mattress, he glanced at the clock. It was late into the morning. Usually, his alarm went off at seven so he could get prepared for the day, but it appeared the girls had turned it off while he was asleep. They were determined to make sure he took the weekend off.

Climbing out of bed, he went to the bathroom and took a quick shower before heading downstairs.

“Good morning,” Sylvia smiled, kissing him on the cheek. “Do you want something to eat?”

“That sounds great,” Harry replied. “Where are the girls?”

“They have something planned, but they didn’t tell me what it was,” she said, setting a pan on the stove and smiling at him over her shoulder. “I think they were worried Amanda would spoil it.”

Harry turned to look at Amanda, who was tying yellow bows around Alfie’s ears.

“You don’t know what they’re up to, do you?” he asked hopefully.

Amanda shook her head. Sighing, he smiled and tussled her hair on his way to the kitchen. After pouring himself a cup of tea, he sat at the table. He was barely settled when Amanda climbed onto his lap, and Alfie jumped into the chair next to his. Discretely, he waved his hand over the dog to check the enchantments, and what he found was surprising. Not only were they as strong as the day he’d cast them, but they’d taken on a life of their own. Admittedly, the charms he’d used were quite complex, but they’d changed slightly since he’d originally cast them. It was like the magic was growing as Alfie did.

Harry had seen magic act like that before, most notably Voldemort's Horcruxes, but it also felt similar to the Sorting Hat. It made him wonder if it had something to do with magic cast from the Elder Wand or if something else was at work.

As Sylvia set a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon in front of him, he let his curiosity pass and enjoyed his late breakfast.

"Where's the paper?" Harry asked, glancing over the table.

"The girls burned it," Sylvia chuckled, sitting beside him and handing Amanda a piece of toast. "They wanted to make sure you don't worry about anything this weekend."

Smiling, Harry shook his head and quickly finished his breakfast. An hour later, he was sitting in the living room, playing with Amanda and Alfie, when the front door opened, and Lily walked inside.

"Hey," she said, smiling tenderly and kissing him softly.

"Hey," Harry replied. "Where have you been?"

"Oh, just helping the girls at the shop," Lily said, taking a seat on the couch and turning to Sylvia. "Dorea invited us over for dinner. Do you and Amanda want to come?"

"Sure," Sylvia shrugged. "It's been a while since we've had a day out. When are we leaving?"

"About half an hour. Narcissa and Bellatrix are going to meet us there as soon as they're done at the Den," Lily replied, then turned back to Harry. "You should go put on a nice shirt."

"Yes, dear," Harry smiled.

Getting to his feet. He tossed Amanda over his shoulder and raced up the stairs, causing her to squeal and laugh. Sylvia and Lily smiled and followed them up at a more sedate pace. Half an hour later, they were back in the living room, and Lily was calling Dorea on the mirror. After greeting her pleasantly, they all stepped through into Potter Manor.

Harry noticed a few changes immediately. The mirror had been moved from the living room to Charlus' office, and their hastily cast protective charms on the walls had been replaced with much stronger and more permanent enchantments. He also felt the wards around the property, which had been completely repaired and upgraded. They wouldn't hold out forever if Voldemort decided to attack them again, but they would buy them a few more minutes.

"Hello, dear," Dorea said, hugging Harry and bringing him out of his reverie.

"Hey," he said, hugging her back with a smile. "I see you got everything fixed."

"We did," Dorea said, pulling back with a smile and a sparkle in her eyes. "Wait until you see the new kitchen. You'll have to tell me what you think."

She held her hand out invitingly to Amanda and then led her out of the office. The rest of the house was dark, but with a flick of her wand, Dorea turned on the lights.

"SURPRISE!"

Harry jumped and stared in shock at the laughing, cheering crowd. His classmates, friends, and several of his employees were packed into the kitchen. Giggling, Lily put her hand on the small of his back and led him further into the room.

"Wow," Harry said. "You did all this just so I'd take a day off?"

For some reason, that caused everyone to laugh even harder.

"It's your birthday," Lily laughed.

"Is it?" Harry asked, checking his watch. "Bloody hell."

Shaking his head, he smiled and exchanged hugs with Narcissa, Bellatrix, and the rest of the girls who came forward. The guys patted him on the back, and even James and Sirius wished him a sincere happy birthday.

"How do you forget your own birthday?" Greyson asked, clapping him on the back.

"I've been busy," Harry replied defensively.

"Then it's a good thing you've finally taken a break," Connie said, handing him a butterbeer.

"I don't know how you can keep it up," Jenna said, shaking her head.

"Have you seen his girlfriends?" Greyson asked with a smirk.

Harry chuckled as Connie and Jenna rolled their eyes, "I have to get a lot done during the Summer. I've only got a month left before I go back to Hogwarts."

"Oh, right," Jenna said. "I forgot you're that young."

Harry shrugged, "Where's Moody?"

"Taking delivery of his mirrors," Connie said, rolling her eyes. "He said he'll stop by later."

As Harry enjoyed his birthday party, five cloaked figures suddenly appeared on a quiet Muggle street.

“Get that ward up quickly,” Avery hissed.

“I know,” Gibbon growled, muttering under his breath, “Stupid bitch.”

Drawing his wand, he whipped it around in a complex pattern while softly mumbling an incantation. A solid green dome began forming around the two-story house in front of him. The moment the dome connected with the ground, everything inside, including the Death Eaters, vanished from sight.

“It’s set,” Gibbon said quietly.

“Good,” Avery replied. “Now, let’s get in there, kill him, and get out. The Dark Lord wants this done quickly.”

As she turned away and marched toward the house, Gibbon shared a frustrated look with Yaxley, who sighed and adjusted the black patch covering his left eye.

“I can’t believe the Dark Lord put her in charge again,” he said.

“Whatever happens, we let her go first,” Yaxley replied.

Nodding, Gibbon and Yaxley followed Avery up the sidewalk while Crabbe and Goyle’s hulking forms brought up the rear. Avery paused to slowly and quietly open the gate before they crept forward.

“You two,” she said, turning to Yaxley and Gibbon. “Go around the back and-”

The concrete slab under their feet suddenly gave way and turned into a slide. Darkness engulfed them as they slid underground. Avery screamed as she fell, only to be cut off when she fell face-first onto a hard, concrete floor a moment later. Yaxley and Gibbon landed on their backs next to her and groaned in pain. As the sound of more sliding approached, they shared a wide-eyed look and rolled to the side just as Crabbe and Goyle shot out of the chute.

Avery, who was pushing herself up on her arms, was flattened under the large men's weight. The air was knocked from her lungs, and she sucked in a desperate breath while her face contorted in pain.

"Get off me, you fat fucks!" she screamed.

A grunt left her lips when they used her to push themselves back to their feet, and she seethed when one of their hands landed on her bum. As soon as she was free, she scrambled to her feet and whipped out her wand, ready to curse them. But before she could, she noticed movement out of the corner of her eye. Spinning to the side, she lit her wand with a curse on her lips, only to realize she was staring at herself.

"What the fuck?" she asked.

The room they were in, a basement, housed dozens of mirrors arrayed in a maze-like fashion. When they heard a grinding noise behind them, the Death Eaters spun around to see the chute they'd slide out of close itself back up.

"Well, look what the Kneazle dragged in."

The Death Eaters whipped back around and faced the reflections of dozens of Alastor Moody. Narrowing his eyes, Goyle raised his wand and aimed it at one of the mirrors. A writhing, hissing green curse hit it and bounced back, hitting Goyle in the stomach before he could react. His eyes widened, and he clutched his stomach before falling to his knees. Gazing up at Crabbe, he opened his mouth to speak, only for a river of blood to leak out of his lips.

“Organ Rupturing Curse, that’s a nasty one,” Moody said with a raspy laugh.

Panting furiously, Crabbe raised his wand at the same mirror Goyle had just tried to curse. Before he could get a spell off, Yaxley grabbed his arm and wrenched it down.

“Don’t, you idiot!” he growled. “The same thing will happen to you.”

Crabbe wrenched his arm free and glared furiously at Moody while Gibbon knelt down next to Goyle and tried to reverse the effects of his curse.

“Can you fix him?” Crabbe asked.

“I can stop it, but I can’t fix the damage,” Gibbon said. “I’m not a healer.”

“Come on, Moody!” Avery yelled angrily. “Get out here, you coward!”

“Coward?” Moody asked. “And five people breaking into an old man’s home makes you so brave, does it?”

Moody smirked as Avery glowered at him.

“I don’t make the rules, lass. I just play the game,” he continued. “I’ll make a deal with you, though. At the end of this maze, there’s a door that leads to the backyard. If you make it that far, I’ll let you leave.”

“How about I kill you instead?” Avery hissed.

Getting to his feet, Gibbon grabbed her by the arm and pulled her off to the side.

"We need to get out of here," he told her softly.

Avery wrenched her arm free and glared at him furiously.

"And risk the wrath of the Dark Lord when we tell him Moody is still alive?" she asked.

"I'd rather suffer the Dark Lord's displeasure than spend the rest of my life in Azkaban," Gibbon spat. "I warned you that attacking him at home was a stupid idea. We should have been the ones to lay a trap instead of falling into one."

"Watch your tone, Gibbon," Avery said, raising her wand threateningly. "The Dark Lord trusts me more than you."

Gibbon snorted, "For now."

"Are you two finished with your little lover's quarrel?" Moody asked boredly. "I've got a birthday party to get to."

Glaring at him over Gibbon's shoulder, Avery glanced around the room and growled angrily.

"Crabbe, help Goyle up!" she barked. "We're getting out of here. Yaxley, you're up front with me. Gibbon, you watch our backs."

Grunting, Gibbon took up the back while Avery cautiously stepped into the maze of mirrors. Wands lit, they crept forward at a slow, cautious pace. Crabbe strained as he helped Goyle walk with one arm and kept his wand ready in the other hand. Gibbon walked backward, trying not to show how creeped out he was by Moody's smirk. The man had them right where he wanted them, and he knew it. He obviously had Potter's mirrors and could leave any time he wanted.

But instead, he stayed, toying with them like a Kneazle with a mouse.

Watching the reflection closely, Gibbon noticed Moody's lips move, but he couldn't hear anything. A moment later, Moody raised his wand with a grin. Gibbon raised a shield on instinct, but there was no spell other than a brief flash of light. Then, he heard a hex hitting a shield, followed by Avery grunting. Spinning around, he watched as she dropped her shield, and Moody laughed.

Everyone had reacted the way Gibbon had, but none of them could tell where the spell would actually come from until it was cast. The only solace he had was that Moody couldn't cast from every reflection at once. If they were careful, they could make it out in one piece.

"Is this all you have, Moody?" Avery asked angrily. "Pathetic tricks?"

"Shut up and keep moving," Gibbon barked. "The sooner we get out of here, the better."

Avery glared at him, but she continued forward when she turned back around. She only made it a few steps before Gibbon saw Moody's lips move silently, and then he raised his wand again. They all raised a shield, and again, the actual spell came from the front. Avery grunted under the force of the spell and sneered at Moody.

"You'll have to do better than that, old man," she spat as Gibbon turned around to check on her.

Gibbon glowered at her back. The stupid witch was going to get all of them killed if she kept taunting him like that.

Behind him, one of the mirrors shimmered slightly, and the Moody stepped out. Pressing his wand to Gibbon's back, he silently Stunned him and caught his body before he could fall. While his reflection continued to smirk, he dragged Gibbon back through the mirror he'd come from.

A moment later, Yaxley glanced over his shoulder and narrowed his eyes when he didn't see Gibbon.

"Gibbon?" Yaxley called. "Gibbon!"

"Don't worry about him," Moody laughed, glancing over to the side of the room. "He's just fine."

"Shit!" Avery cursed. "Idiot! Yaxley, you take up the rear."

Yaxley glanced at Moody and unconsciously adjusted his eyepatch.

"No way, you do it," he replied. "I'll take the lead."

"I'm in charge, Yaxley," Avery growled.

"I don't care," he said. "It's your fault we're here in the first place. Either you take up the rear, or I'll make a run for it. I bet Moody would rather catch you than me."

Avery glowered and glanced at Moody, who smirked.

"Fine," she grumbled.

Edging past Crabbe and Goyle, she nervously took up the rear while Yaxley cautiously moved forward. Moody raised his wand again and laughed when they all stopped and raised a shield. Yaxley eyed the reflections with trepidation, glancing from one to the next, waiting for a spell that never came.

And then he felt something wind around his ankle.

Shining his wand light down at his feet, he cursed. Hundreds of lengths of black rope slithered across the floor like snakes and wrapped around their legs. Moody let out a deep, wheezing laugh as the Death Eaters frantically cast Cutting Charms to free themselves.

“Crabbe, help!” Goyle shouted.

Goyle, weakened from his own curse, couldn’t cut the ropes fast enough. With his ankles wrapped tight, the ropes pulled taut, sending him crashing onto his back with a pained grimace. He coughed up more blood as his wand fell from his hand, and the ropes began to drag him along the floor toward one of the mirrors.

“Goyle!” Crabbe shouted.

Snarling, he tried to help his friend, but every time he took his attention off of the ropes for even a moment, they threatened to overwhelm him. Goyle clawed at the floor desperately as he was inevitably dragged into the mirror while Moody continued to laugh. Yaxley noted that Goyle didn’t appear on the other side of the mirror with Moody, but he had no idea what that meant. Clearly, the old man was working with magic far more complex and powerful than anything Potter had on the market.

“You bastard!” Crabbe yelled furiously at Moody.

His eyes burned with rage as he raised his wand and aimed it at the mirror.

“No!” Yaxley shouted.

But Crabbe didn’t listen. He unleashed a powerful Bludgeoning Hex, possibly hoping to break the mirror, only for the spell to rebound and send him crashing onto his back. The ropes on the floor surrounded him like ravenous serpents as he screamed fearfully. In a matter of seconds, he was completely bound from head to toe, his screams muffled by a length of rope acting like a

gag. Yaxley could only watch helplessly, too busy defending himself to help, as Crabbe was dragged into the mirror behind him and disappeared.

Suddenly, the rope went limp. Yaxley panted heavily from fear and exertion. Taking a brief glance back over his shoulder at Avery, who was still cursing the rope, he turned back around and sprinted through the maze. He prayed he could make it to the exit before Moody caught him. The old man's reflection smirked at him as if he knew exactly what he was thinking.

"Yaxley!" Avery screamed. "Yaxley!"

He ignored her and kept running, bouncing off of a couple of mirrors when they made a sharp right. When the maze turned sharply to the right a moment later, he put his hand out to brace himself against the glass so he didn't have to slow down to the turn. But when his hand should have contacted the cool, smooth surface, there was nothing. Yaxley fell straight through the mirror like it wasn't even there and sprawled out on the floor on the other side next to a pair of heavy black boots.

His wand was ripped from his hand before he could react, and all he could do was stare fearfully up at a grinning Alastor Moody before everything went black.

Avery cursed as she watched Yaxley disappear around the corner. She scowled as she listened to his footsteps fade into the distance. Before they disappeared completely, she heard something heavy hit the ground and then silence.

"Looks like it's just you and me, lass," Moody grinned. "Ready to give up yet?"

"Go to hell!" Avery yelled.

"Least you've got more spine than your father had," Moody smirked.

With a furious scream, she raised her wand, and a torrent of fire shot from the tip. Moody laughed as the fire reflected off of the mirror, and she was forced to shield herself from her spell. Dropping her shield, she sprinted through the maze. It hadn't worked for Yaxley, but she was better than him. She had been hand-chosen by the Dark Lord himself. If anyone could make it out, it was her.

Moody's reflections chuckled at her, and she scowled, her eyes glittering with thoughts of revenge. She would make him pay for putting her father in Azkaban. Moody would suffer a long and painful death when she got her hands on him.

Following the twists and turns of the maze for several moments, she finally spotted the door at the end. As she raced through the final stretch of mirrors, Moody fired a couple of hexes at her. With a smirk, she blocked them easily. Reaching the door, she twisted the handle and burst through to the other side. But she wasn't outside. She was in a small, square room made of dull grey concrete.

The door clicked closed behind her, and as Avery turned around, her wand was wrenched from her hand. Instead of facing a door, she found herself staring at another mirror where a smirking Moody caught her wand effortlessly.

"Moody!" Avery shouted. "What is this!? You said I was free to leave if I made it to the end!"

Moody shrugged, "I lied."

"You son of a bitch!" Avery raged.

"I'd love to stay and chat, but I've got a party to get to," Moody said. "Try not to kill yourself while I'm gone."

With one final smirk, Moody vanished, leaving Avery staring at her nothing but her own disheveled reflection. Rushing up to the mirror, she grabbed the frame and tried to pull it open, but it wouldn't budge.

“Moody!” she screamed.

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In the second-floor guest room of his home, Alastor thoughtfully glanced at his other prisoners, wondering if he should keep them a bit longer. Waving his wand over Goyle, he frowned at the results. If he didn't get him to St. Mungo's soon, the idiot would die. It wouldn't be a great loss by any stretch, but he might have useful information. Sighing, he turned back to the rest of the room.

Two mirrors faced each other in the center of the room. One was Potter's Transportation Mirror, while the one facing it Alastor had enchanted himself to reflect all but the most powerful spells. Two more mirrors a couple of feet apart sat to the right of that. The first was connected to a Reflection Enchantment that he'd painstakingly placed in front of every single mirror in his basement and the one he'd enchanted to reflect spells. The Reflection Enchantment allowed him to enchant his reflection so that the charms he'd placed always projected his reflection even if he wasn't in front of the mirror they were connected to.

It wasn't a complicated spell or a particularly useful one in most circumstances. But, in Moody's mind, combined with Harry's ingenious form of transportation, it was turned into a diabolical trap. He'd only just finished setting up the mirrors and was getting ready to leave for Potter's party when the Death Eaters appeared in his Foe Glass.

Reaching into his pocket, Alastor pulled out his mirror.

“David Bones,” he called.

A moment later, the reflection of his face shimmered, and David's face took its place.

“Hey, Alastor,” David smiled. “Are you going to be here soon? Dorea's about to cut the cake.”

“As soon as I can,” Moody replied. “Is Potter around?”

“Yeah, you need to talk to him?” David asked.

“No, but I could use a hand wrapping his present,” Moody smirked.

Turning the mirror, he showed him the four unconscious and trussed-up Death Eaters on the floor.

“Merlin, Alastor,” David gasped. “Please tell me you didn’t go after them on your own.”

“Course I didn’t,” Moody said. “They showed up uninvited, so I decided to show them how I redecorated.”

David snorted and shook his head, “It worked, I take it?”

Moody’s only response was a sinister grin.

“I’ll send someone over to pick them up,” David said, fighting a smile. “Any injuries?”

“Goyle hit himself with an Organ Rupturing Curse, but he’ll live,” Moody replied. “Probably.”

“Right. Just don’t mention any of this when you get to the party,” David said, glancing cautiously over his shoulder. “Harry’s girlfriends don’t want anyone talking about work, and frankly, that Bellatrix scares me.”

“Ah, she’s a good lass,” Moody said. “Save me some cake. It shouldn’t take long to clean up this mess.”

“No promises,” David smirked.