

Chapter 8

(A/N: From this point forward, the MFBI will be renamed to the MIB, for Magical Investigation Bureau, and the MIB will be the MIA, for Magical Intelligence Agency. The Complete file has been changed to reflect this, but the individual chapters haven't just yet. I'll get to them at some point, hopefully soon. I think this will make more sense with the MIB being referred to as the Men in Black compared to what I previously wrote.)

Harry stumbled out of the floor and once again braced himself for a painful meeting with the concrete floor of the Washington D.C. Union Station. However, instead of meeting the unforgiving floor, he felt like he'd landed on a nice fluffy mattress. Peeking open first one eye and then the other, he pushed himself up, watching as the floor sank under his hands in a way that was indicative of a Spongify Charm. Looking up, he smiled at the tall, dark-skinned man standing over him, wand in hand.

"Thanks, Frank," Harry smiled.

"Good morning, Harry," Frank replied before turning his gaze back to the platform.

Grabbing his trunk, Harry moved out of the way just a moment before Dora stepped out of the Floo. She walked out perfectly fine and sent a small smirk in his direction when she spotted him dusting off his clothes. The moment she stepped on the Spongify Charm, she stumbled and windmilled her arms. With a squawk, she dropped her trunk and landed on her butt. Fortunately, she was still on the Charm when she did.

"Hey, Frank," Dora greeted him with a sigh. "I take it this was your handiwork?"

"It was," Frank said, reversing the Charm and helping her to her feet. "My apologies, Tonks."

"No problem," Dora smiled. "I'm used to falling. Oh, wait until you see Sirius. You're going to love this."

Harry snickered to himself as he grabbed a cart and loaded their trunks onto it. Ted stepped out of the Floo next, followed by Andi and, finally, Sirius. In contrast to his normally scruffy, unbothered appearance, he'd trimmed his goatee, his hair was moused back, and he smelled strongly of the cologne Dora and Harry had gotten him for Christmas several years ago. As far as they were aware, it was the first time he'd actually worn it.

Instead of his MIB suit, Sirius wore black slacks, a dress shirt, and a blazer. He'd deliberately taken the day off from work, and while he told the family that it was so he could see Harry and Dora off to school, they were convinced it was because he couldn't shut up about seeing Marlene again.

The two had been exchanging letters by owl every couple of days since they'd gotten back from the Dueling tournament. When the family owl, Archimedes, had gotten too exhausted to keep making the trip after two weeks of back and forth from Nevada to New York, Sirius managed to cajole Levina into delivering it for him. When Marlene notified him that his last letter had arrived soaked from a sudden thunderstorm that had knocked out power for several hours, he hadn't tried again. Instead, he went out and bought a short-eared owl that they'd named Plato. He was specifically bred to fly long distances.

Sirius tried to argue he'd gotten him to make the flights to Salem, but none believed him.

"Morning, Frank," Sirius said, patting the larger man on the shoulder distractedly as he gazed around the platform.

"Good Morning," Frank said, arching an eyebrow over the top of the frame of his black sunglasses.

"We got here early. I don't think she's here yet," Dora told him.

"What? Who?" Sirius replied quickly, turning away from the platform. "I wasn't looking for anyone. I was just, you know, making sure there weren't any problems."

“Uh-huh, sure,” Harry said, looking around his shoulder. “Oh, look, there she is. Hi Marlene!”

Sirius’ head snapped around so fast his neck popped. As he looked around excitedly, Harry and Dora burst into laughter. Realizing he’d been played, Sirius folded his arms over his chest and grumbled softly to himself. With a chuckle, Ted clapped him on the shoulder and led him onto the platform. The adults took seats and talked with the other parents they knew while Harry and Dora went to catch up with their friends.

Harry had just greeted Amanda with a hug and an appreciative glance that earned him a wink when Dora elbowed him. At first, he thought she was just trying to get them to stop flirting, but then he noticed her nodding her chin towards the Floo. Following her gaze, he grinned as he watched Marlene and Jenna step onto the platform.

Sirius had spotted them as well. Standing up suddenly, he ran a hand through his hair, took a nervous breath, and plastered a roguish grin on his face. Grabbing Dora by the hand, Harry darted behind one of the pillars so they could listen in.

“Marlene!” Sirius yelled, smiling widely.

“Hello, Sirius,” Marlene greeted him with a smile as they met in the middle of the platform. “Look at you all cleaned up. What poor woman do you have your sights set on today?”

“Oh, no one,” Sirius said, running a hand through his hair again. “Just decided it was time to look a little more professional for work, you know? You look great, too, by the way. Hi, Jenna. Excited to start at Ilvermorny?”

Smiling shyly, Jenna nodded.

“She’s a bit nervous,” Marlene said, smiling softly at her daughter. “Are Harry and Tonks around? I was hoping to ask them if they’d show her around the school a bit when she gets there.”

“They should be around here somewhere,” Sirius said, looking over his shoulder.

Sharing a look, Harry and Dora shared a mischievous grin as they stepped out from around the pillar.

“We’re right here,” Dora said, grinning.

Walking up to Jenna, she wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

“Why don’t Harry and I introduce you to some of our friends while these two catch up?” she asked. “It’s been what, a whole three days since Sirius wrote her a letter. I bet he has so much new stuff to tell her.”

“That’s a great idea. Why don’t you two introduce her to your friends? Now,” Sirius said with a pointed look.

“Sure,” Dora grinned, leading Jenna away. “Oh, and Sirius just bought a special long-distance owl if you ever need to send a letter home. He’s really fast.”

Harry smirked as Sirius glared at the back of her head.

“Hey, Sirius, since you took the whole day off from work, could you ask the guy at the bookstore if they can order that dueling book for me, and I’ll pick it up on the first Salem visit?” he asked.

“Sure, kiddo,” Sirius said, pushing him away and blushing slightly as Marlene arched her brow.

Grinning, Harry walked away.

“So, this is to look more professional at work, is it?” Marlene, just before he was out of earshot.

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Two months into the school year, at half past two in the morning, Harry crept out of his bed. Dressed in all black, he silently unlocked his trunk, opened a hidden compartment in the back, and pulled out a sleek, polished black broom with a wristwatch strapped to the handle. Closing his trunk softly and locking it back up, he snuck down to the common room, peeking around the corner to make sure it was empty. When he saw no one, he pulled a black balaclava from his pocket and donned it before making his way over to the nearest window.

Harry was hit by a blast of winter air that made him shiver before mounting his broom. The built-in Protective Charms wrapped around him, blocking out the cold and wind as he flew outside, closing the window behind him with a casual flick of his wand. Practically invisible against the dark, moonless sky, he headed out towards the Atlantic at incredible speed. Staying low to the ground, he turned South as soon as he hit the coast.

He deliberately stayed under the sound barrier so he didn't give himself away too soon. It took him just under half an hour to fly the four hundred and sixty miles to his destination. Pulling up sharply, Harry turned west and accelerated, rattling windows in Delaware as he rapidly passed over the state. Just as he was nearing the center of Washington, D.C., two riders on Lockheed X-87 brooms rose rapidly to meet him. In moments, they were pacing him on either side.

"HALT!" one of them shouted, his voice carrying over the wind thanks to an Amplification Charm. "UNITED STATES AURORS! STOP NOW, OR YOU WILL BE FIRED UPON!"

Harry grinned under his balaclava. It was time to find out what his new broom was made of.

Leaning forward, he accelerated hard, forcing the Aurors to do the same. As they pushed the speeds higher, Harry glanced down at the watch he'd strapped to the handle of the broom. Rather than keep track of the time, this watch kept track of his speed. Michelle had helped him design it, though he doubted she expected him to use it like this. The hour hand told him what Mach he was at, the minute hand the points, and the second hand marked his altitude in increments of one thousand.

He knew Lockheed had improved his design at least slightly as he watched their speeds increase to Mach two-point-five.

“YOU CAN’T OUTFLY US! STOP NOW!” the Auror shouted.

Smirking, Harry pushed his broom harder. As the X-87s started to buck and slow as they neared Mach three, he kept accelerating. He could have gone even faster, but he wasn’t done testing his broom quite yet. A red, sizzling, Stunning Hex sailed harmlessly over his shoulder as Harry pulled the nose up and started to climb rapidly. The Aurors followed, their hands too busy controlling their brooms to keep casting.

Higher and higher, they climbed, rocketing towards the low-lying cloud cover. As the second hand ticked closer to one on the watch face, denoting ten thousand feet, he glanced over his shoulder. One Auror had already pulled off, but the other was doggedly pursuing him. As they passed eleven thousand feet, the Auror began to shake his head, his broom weaving slightly in the air. Unfortunately for him, it looked like Lockheed hadn’t thought to incorporate a Bubblehead Charm into the shield.

Just as his watch ticked past twelve thousand feet, the Auror lost consciousness and fell from his broom. With a curse, Harry stopped and wheeled around to chase after him. He wanted to test his broom, not get an Auror killed. Diving down, he rapidly caught up to the man. Before he could reach out to grab him, the man’s body twisted and warped into nothingness.

Harry blinked in surprise before quickly realizing that he must have been wearing a protective talisman. Before he could contemplate the man’s safety further, another Stunning Hex flew over his head. In his dive, he’d gone low enough for the other Auror to catch up to him, and he’d brought five of his friends.

Deciding that it was time to leave, Harry turned East and pushed his broom to accelerate. The Aurors kept up for about a minute before he began to out-strip them. By the time he hit Mach three, they were nothing but specks in the distance. As he continued East, more riders rose to meet him. While his broom was more than fast enough to outrun them, he didn’t want to get caught like that MIA agent by being too predictable.

Knowing he had an absolute altitude advantage, he climbed to thirty thousand feet to be safe and continued flying, pushing his broom towards Mach four. Harry reached the coast faster than he expected and smiled when he spotted a roiling grey cloud with flashes of lightning in the distance.

“Perfect,” he said, smiling to himself.

Flying inside the cloud, he pulled straight up and stepped off his broom, holding it to the side with one hand. His momentum carried him up past forty-five thousand feet, giving him a glimpse of the top of the fluffy grey cloud and the calm, starlit sky above before he fell back down into the growing tempest.

After several seconds, Harry heard a warbling cry and turned over to face the ground as he smiled. A large, grey, shadowy figure dove under him before pulling up to meet his falling body. He landed lightly on Levina’s back as she leveled out, a flash of lightning lighting her up for just a moment.

“Woo!” Harry whooped. “Nice catch! Let’s go home, girl!”

With a thrill, Levina banked to the side and headed back to Salem.

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“I’m sorry, sir,” a young, bespeckled wizard said, looking up from the screen in front of him.

“What do you mean he’s gone?” a man in his late fifties asked, his forehead wrinkled in consternation.

“We lost him in the storm,” the young man replied. “There’s nothing on radar or the magic detector. I think the weather might be interfering with the signal. Aurors are on the way to investigate.”

“Alert me the moment they find anything,” the older man said, straightening up and smoothing out his suit. “I need to go brief the president.”

“Yes, sir,” the young man replied.

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When the storm reached Salem, Harry gave Levina an affectionate pat on the neck and rolled off of her back. Falling through the air, he mounted his broom but didn't actually begin flying until he was dangerously close to the ground. He flew straight back to the school and opened the common room window with a flick of his wand. No one was there to see as he landed almost silently and pulled off his balaclava. Grinning to himself, he crept up the stairs, put away his broom, and changed into his pajamas before crawling into bed.

The missed sleep he would suffer the next day was well worth the night he'd had. Maybe next time, the MIA wouldn't be so quick to risk invading someone else's airspace now that they knew someone could do it to them, too.

The next morning, Harry groggily made his way down to breakfast.

“Rough night?” Dora asked as he took the seat next to her.

“I got engrossed in my new dueling book,” he muttered as an excuse. “I think I got three hours of sleep, maybe.”

“At least you were studying for once,” Michelle said, taking a bite of her toast.

“I study,” Harry said defensively. “I just skip over the boring stuff.”

Michelle shook her head and opened a book on Transfigurations, Harry's worst subject. He was sure she did it on purpose to tease him.

"Mr. Potter."

Turning, he found Professor Wilkinson standing behind him.

"Good morning, professor," Harry smiled.

"Good morning," the professor smiled. "I'm sorry to pull you away from your breakfast, but the Headmistress has asked to see you."

"Me?" Harry asked, desperately trying to hide his nervousness. "Do you know why?"

"Someone from the government wants to talk to you," Professor Wilkinson answered.

Nodding, Harry got to his feet, reminding himself that there was no way they could know it had been him on that broom for sure. The fact that they were asking to see him and not placing him in cuffs was a pretty good indicator of that. He followed Professor Wilkinson through the school to Professor Turner's office.

As they entered, Harry found a witch and wizard waiting for him with the Headmistress. One was a severe-looking man with short, cropped hair that was greying around the temples. He wore Auror robes, had steel grey eyes, and a shrewd gaze. The woman was in her thirties with blonde hair and a substantial bust. Looking to be in her early thirties, she was quite pretty, and the crest on the breast of her robes marked her as a member of the Magical Congress.

"Good morning, Harry," Professor Turner smiled. "Thank you for coming. This is Mark Majors of the MIA and Congresswoman Natalie Powers. They wanted to talk to you about that broom of yours."

“Sure,” Harry said, hiding his nervousness as he took a seat.

“Hello, Harry,” Natalie said with a pretty smile. “First of all, I just want to congratulate you for making such an impressive broom at such a young age. It’s really quite the accomplishment.”

“Thanks,” Harry said, though he felt like he was being talked down to.

“I’m sure you’ve heard about that incident we had with Russia last year,” Natalie continued, crossing her legs and folding her hands in her lap. “Since one of our MIA agents was captured, Lockheed has been hard at work trying to improve the design you gave them. Unfortunately, they haven’t had much luck. This morning, the president offered a one hundred thousand Galleon reward to any broom company that could make something better. As I’m sure you can understand, we want to continue to keep our agents safe. Normally, we wouldn’t make this offer to a private citizen, but since you created the broom in the first place, I was able to convince the Secretary of State to let us make the same offer to you.”

“A hundred grand to make a broom better than the one I made last year?” Harry asked incredulously.

“It would have to be better than the X-87,” Mark replied, meeting his gaze firmly. “This is no joke. We need a broom that can reach a minimum speed of Mach four and an altitude of thirty-five thousand feet.”

Harry rubbed his hand over his mouth to stop himself from grinning. They weren’t here because they thought that broom rider from the night before was him. They thought Russia had reverse-engineered the broom they’d captured and made it better. Now, they were coming to him to essentially beat himself; they just didn’t know it.

It was a good thing he hadn’t pushed his new broom to the limit. He was more than capable of giving them a broom that could do what they wanted, and that still wouldn’t beat his own. Better yet, they would fund research he’d already done on his own.

Somehow, Harry had unintentionally started an arms race for a broom that the US would be too scared to use again and that he'd already designed. If the government did try something stupid again, he'd just have to give them another scare. And, maybe next time, he wouldn't be so quick to fix their problem. He wasn't above using this opportunity to punish them for misusing his design in the first place, but he wasn't going to give them anything too good. He didn't trust them enough for that. Still, if he could use that money for his own private research...

"I think I could do that," he said, working to keep a straight face.

Dora was going to freak out when he told her about this.

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Harry and Dora sat in the Great Hall with their friends, talking about their plans for Christmas break. While the professors put up decorations in the background, Jenna and Michelle joined them. The two had become quite close friends over the past few months. As Harry greeted the girls, Plato circled overhead and landed lightly on Dora's shoulder. A moment later, another owl landed in front of Jenna.

Dora gave Plato a treat before ripping open the letter. She skimmed it quickly before letting out a snort.

"What?" Harry asked.

"Well, Mom definitely thinks you're up to no good," Dora smirked. "She told me to keep an eye on you."

Amanda scoffed, "Keep an eye on him? You usually encourage him."

"Not always," Dora said, giving Harry a pointed look.

She'd been quite mad at him for a few days after he'd told her about his little nighttime game of cat and mouse with MIA Aurors. She'd gotten over it quickly, though, and shared a hearty laugh with him afterward when he finally got to tell her what happened in Professor Turner's office.

"Oh!" Dora exclaimed, a smirk twisting her lips. "And Sirius would like to know if either of us has a problem with Jenna and Marlene staying with us for Christmas."

"Really?" Harry asked, grabbing the letter. "There's no way they're not dating."

"I know, right?" Dora asked, then turned to Jenna and looked at her questioningly.

"My Mom asked the same thing," Jenna said, handing her the letter she'd received.

"Oh yeah, they are definitely dating," Dora said with a grin as she read it. "We need to come up with a way to mess with them."

"Why?" Jenna asked.

"Because it's fun," Harry shrugged.

"And to punish them for not just telling us they're dating," Dora said. "I bet they're waiting until we get home for break to tell us."

"They probably didn't want to tell you in a letter, so you had less time to think of a prank," Amanda pointed out.

"Semantics," Dora said, waving away the perfectly valid point.

“That’s not-” Michelle cut herself off when she noticed Dora’s smirk and pinched the bridge of her nose with a sigh.

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A couple of weeks later, Harry, Dora, and Jenna stepped off of the Ilvermorny Express and onto the platform of Union Station. While Harry gathered the trunks, the girls greeted their parents.

“How was school?” Marlene asked, hugging her daughter tightly.

“It was great!” Jenna smiled. “Harry showed me all around the school, told me about the classes and professors, and helped me make a few friends.”

“That’s wonderful,” Marlene said, smiling softly.

As Harry approached with the cart loaded with all three trunks, he grinned at Sirius, who he noticed was standing suspiciously close to Marlene.

“Hey, kiddo,” Sirius grinned, pulling him into a hug. “Stay out of trouble?”

“Define trouble,” Harry grinned.

Chuckling, Sirius messed up his hair.

“Excuse me, Mr. Potter, Mr. Black?” A young man with a camera asked as he approached them cautiously. “I’m Ben Willer from Wizarding Times. I’m doing a report on how you won the new broom contract. Would it be alright if I got a picture and maybe asked you a couple of questions?”

Sirius looked to Harry, who shrugged uncaringly.

“I think we can spare a couple of minutes,” Sirius smiled.

“Great,” Ben grinned, bobbling his camera nervously as he snatched it from around his neck.

Grinning, Sirius slung his arm over Harry’s shoulders.

“Jenna said you helped her get settled at Ilvermorny,” he said softly. “Thanks for looking after her. I know it means a lot to Marlene.”

“No problem,” Harry grinned. “Jenna’s great. We really get along.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” Sirius said, smiling happily.

“Smile,” Ben called, raising the camera to his eye.

“I’ve been thinking about asking her out,” Harry said.

The picture of Harry grinning while Sirius turned to him could be found on page six of the Wizing Times the next day, along with a small article about Harry.

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Across the ocean, the small article was picked up and reprinted by the Daily Prophet. In a large manor, a man with greying, straw-colored hair and pale blue eyes paused on the photo. His eyes blazed with fury as he stared at it. But he wasn’t looking at the Boy-Who-Lived. He was staring at the brunette in the background.

“Grunt!” he shouted.

With a pop, a small, emaciated, and terrified House Elf appeared next to him.

“Y-yes, Master?” he squeaked.

“Pack my things and take them to the house in America!” the man barked furiously.

“R-right away, M-master,” the elf said, bowing even as he shook fearfully.

He vanished with another pop, leaving Titius to fume silently as he stared at the picture in the paper. His chair scraped loudly across the wooden floor as he stood abruptly and hurled his teacup at the wall, where it shattered on impact.

“I’m going to kill that bitch,” he growled.