

Speak of the Devil

Chapter 1

“Are you sure about this, Albus?” McGonagall asked nervously. She had pulled her long-time friend and colleague aside for a private conversation. “Is there no other way?”

“I’m afraid that I’m fresh out of ideas, Minerva. The war is not going as I had hoped, and every day more innocents are getting caught up in it. I fear that we’re running out of time,” he told her in a quiet, tired voice. She could see the dark rings and bags underneath his eyes. No doubt she had some of her own. Minerva turned her head and looked over at the Boy Who Lived.

Neville Longbottom was sitting on a ragged, old couch in the Sitting Room of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place. He was sandwiched between his friend, Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley, who McGonagall suspected might be more than just his friend. Unfortunately, she had little time for gossip these days. Though Neville had just turned seventeen, he looked quite a bit older due to the incredible amount of stress that he was under. There were dark shadows underneath his eyes, telling her that he hadn’t been getting much sleep. Ginny rubbed his knee and looked at him tenderly with worry.

Since the second rise of Voldemort, things had been going downhill on a daily basis. Kidnappings, murders, maulings, and worse were becoming commonplace in Britain. Near-constant attacks in the magical world had everyone incredibly stressed, but none more so than Neville. It was his responsibility to take on the Dark Lord, at least that was what he believed. Those beliefs had been egged on by Dumbledore who eventually was forced to share the fact that there was a prophecy involved. No one but Dumbledore and Neville knew the subject and wording of the prophecy, but she could see that it had had a profound effect on the boy. Minerva hoped against hope that the boy was made of the right stuff, but lately, her faith was beginning to waver. It appeared that Neville was on the verge of cracking up. It wasn’t like she could blame him. She was certain that the heavy burden would do a number on *her* mental faculties if she were in that position.

With nothing left to say, she nodded at the Headmaster, and the pair walked back over to the waiting crowd. There were few that didn’t look tired and harassed in the group. Molly and Arthur Weasley were side by side looking unsure. Bill and his new wife, Fleur Delacour were standing next to his parents. Fleur’s arms were tightly wrapped around his. At her side were her own parents, the Delacours. Charlie Weasley was still unmarried and standing alone. The twins were there, as was Ron. Andromeda and her daughter, Nymphadora Tonks were in the crowd, and they were standing next to Shackbolt and Dedalus Diggle. In fact, most of the members of the Order of the Phoenix were present. The only ones who weren’t were those on secret missions.

Albus Dumbledore cleared his throat. “I want to thank everyone for showing up on such short notice. Now that you have all been informed about our plan, I want anyone who isn’t sure to

speak up now while you still have the chance,” he stated plainly. Everyone looked around nervously, studying the faces that were looking back at them.

“What exactly are you conjuring?” Sturgis Podmore suddenly asked.

“Not I ... We ... and we will not be conjuring. We will be summoning,” Dumbledore corrected him.

“Then what will we be summoning?” Podmore asked again.

“The texts and tales are unsure, but it will be unpleasant, to say the least. I suspect that it might be some type of Higher Demon,” he told them. Many shifted uncomfortably when hearing the word Demon.

“Demon?!” Andromeda gasped, hugging Nymphadora closer to her. “Albus, you can’t be serious!”

“I’m afraid I am, my dear, but do not let the name Demon fool you. Many that are known are at least somewhat intelligent. Demons walk the Earth and can be reasoned with. They are a form of Lower Demon.”

“I would hate to see what a Higher Demon is then,” someone said from the back, taking the word right out of everyone’s mouths.

“The important question is, ‘Will it be safe?’,” Arthur Weasley joined in. He had an entire family to think about, and he didn’t think summoning a demon was the brightest idea.

“If we can come to an accord and we follow the letter of the contract, then yes, we will be safe,” Albus told them.

“What ‘appens if we do not follow it?” Fleur asked him.

“It would be very unwise,” he said gravely, leaving it at that.

“What if we can’t come to an agreement?” Bill asked next.

“To summon the being, we must first make a sacrifice as payment for his arrival. The payment for the contract will be negotiated at that time. If no agreement is made, the being will simply return to where he came from,” the old man explained.

“I don’t know about all of this,” Neville suddenly spoke up. “This seems like this may get way out of hand.”

“What other choice do we have?” Nymphadora Tonks countered. “The Auror force is completely decimated, and we haven’t had any new members in over a year. Death Eaters roam the streets without fear, and the Statute of Secrecy is almost in complete shambles. Needless to say, we’ve all failed in our duties. If something isn’t done right away, then things are going to become unbearable. It’s hard to imagine how things could get even worse than they already are, but trust me, they can.”

Everyone quieted down after that. They looked at the Boy Who Lived. He hadn’t exactly lived up to the hype, and because of that, their whole world was falling apart right before their eyes. They knew that it wasn’t fair to put the burden on his shoulders, he was just a child after all. But Dumbledore had such faith in him, so much so that they too had put their faith in him as well. Maybe the boy just needed a bit of help.

“What will it cost us?” Hestia Jones asked. “The contract I mean,” she added.

“Of that, I have no clue,” Dumbledore honestly answered. “If there are no more questions ...?” He looked around and everyone remained quiet. “There is something else to keep in mind,” he suddenly added.

“This being ... I doubt it will be the pleasant sort. Once we let it free, it will have free will just as any other living thing. I can make sure to keep the contract airtight when it comes to our desires, but I can’t stop it from acting out. Only those who are part of the summoning ritual and subsequent contract will be immune from its sorted behaviors. For those who are out on secret missions, I gave explicit orders not to return until I send them word. This is just a fair warning in case anyone gets cold feet and decides not to join the summoning. You will be on your own, and no one will come to your aid. I very much hope that his being can be reasoned with, but there is no guarantee.”

“That doesn’t instill me with confidence, Albus,” grumbled Mad-Eye Moody as everyone appeared to be unsettled.

“I wish I could offer a better guarantee, but alas, I cannot. Desperate times ...” he said and left it at that. “Meet here tonight at eleven o’clock. We will Portkey to the ritual site that I have already set up,” he told them standing up. He needed to go over the potential contract again just to be sure.

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It was already half past eleven once they were all sitting around the circle, holding hands. “Severus,” Dumbledore called out. Snape came in levitating what looked like a body. He waved his wand and placed it in the middle of the circle.

“Albus! Is that ... No one said anything about human sacrifice!” Minerva cried out. Dumbledore found the whole thing unappealing as well.

“This is not some wood nymph or sprite that we are calling upon, Minerva. But if it helps to ease anyone’s conscience, this is a Death Eater that was mortally wounded in battle. He is brain-dead and will never recover. I have kept him alive with potions just in case the times ever became desperate enough. I dare say that time has arrived. As I have said before, if anyone decides to not be a part of this, speak now and I will give you a Portkey home.” No one spoke.

The body was dressed in his Death Eater robes and silver mask. Some suspected that it was Dumbledore’s way of reminding them that this was a killer and a terrorist and that he deserved his fate. In reality, the body was completely covered so that the children wouldn’t have to see what was about to happen. “Then let us begin!” he called out.

Dumbledore was the one to take charge. He cast his magic while twirling his wand like a Maestro’s baton. He strung together long incantations in a language that no one else could recognize. As the time crept closer to midnight, the entire group felt the air become charged. The hairs on their arms and on the backs of their necks stood up straight. Several shivered even though it wasn’t particularly cold that night. “Everyone prick your hands and draw blood just as I instructed. Do it now!” he called out.

Everyone dropped hands and pulled out their enchanted needles. One by one, they jabbed their palms causing small droplets of blood to pool. “Now hold hands again!” Dumbledore called out as thunder cracked above them. Some jumped while others ducked. They looked around and saw no signs of a storm. As they took hands once again, Dumbledore finished up.

“Ak nan san nou, nou rele ou. Avèk nanm sa a, nou ofri peman. Ak demann nou an, nou tann repons ou avèk imilite!” he called out just as the hour hand struck midnight.

They all sat silently with only the distant sound of tree branches clacking together from the moderate breeze. For a second, they thought that it didn’t work, that maybe Dumbledore had made a mistake. That thought quickly exited their minds only a second later. The Death Eater in the middle of the ritual circle began bucking and spasming wildly. In fact, it was shaking so violently that the silver mask flew off of his head. In the moonlight, they could clearly see his face. It was no one they knew, just a random young man who had decided to throw his life away by supporting the Dark Lord. His face was sunken and hollow from the lack of sustenance. His skin was pale and clammy, and his lips were dried and cracked. The Death Eater’s back arched so drastically that they heard the bones in his spine snap like tree branches, and his hands shot up. His fingers twisted and curled as though in tremendous pain. Suddenly, his top half shot forward, and he sat up. His closed eyes opened, and they could see that his irises were a pale, bluish-gray. “Why do you call upon me?” the Death Eater asked in a dual voice. His mouth was moving in an unnatural way, almost like the movement didn’t match the words coming out.

They could hear the Death Eater’s original voice crackling underneath the sound of another that thundered with power.

“We wish to negotiate a contract,” Dumbledore clearly stated. He very well knew that you had to be careful with your words around such beings. The Death Eater’s head twisted in his direction so fast that they could clearly hear his neck break. Many flinched in revulsion.

“Albus Dumbledore ...” the Death Eater hissed in amusement. “What a pleasant surprise!” he cackled out a sound that was similar to that of a rattlesnake. Dumbledore’s eyebrow raised.

“You know me?” he asked, afraid to hear the answer, though he tried not to show it.

“It has been a very long time since you and I have exchanged words.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m afraid that I do not remember,” Dumbledore admitted.

“You would not,” the Death Eater chattered. “A different time ... A different place ... But that no longer matters. What *does* matter is what you desire ... and what you are willing to pay.”

Dumbledore held out the contract. The Death Eater’s body contorted painfully, and they heard the meat puppet cry out in his real voice. Behind the wail of pain was the demon’s delighted laugh. The Death Eater pushed himself to his feet and walked over to Dumbledore. He took the contract from him and read it over.

“Ahh yes ... Voldemort ... I remember him ...,” the being said with malice. The sound of his voice sent chills down Dumbledore’s spine. “... and his merry crew,” he added. “You wish him gone but not dead.”

“There is a prophecy. I only wish for Voldemort to be without his power base. His followers ... you may do with them as you see fit,” Dumbledore told him.

“Prophecy,” the Death Eater hissed, his body twisting in pain. “The Boy Who Lived.”

Everyone turned and looked at Neville who had gone stark white. Neville did not like the sound of his voice or the way he spoke. In fact, he didn’t like anything about this entire situation. Still, he wouldn’t like dying a painful death at the hands of Voldemort either, so he decided to keep his mouth shut as he felt Ginny’s and Hermione’s hands tighten around his own.

“Yes ... The Boy Who Lived ...” Dumbledore agreed.

“And your payment?” its voice sizzled in the air, and high above, the thunder cracked once again.

“We have gold ... jewels ...”

“I care nothing for worldly trinkets. What I collect are *souls*.”

His voice reverberated loudly in their ears as his head snapped in the direction of Neville Longbottom. His eyes were staring directly at the boy's forehead. Neville hissed in pain loudly and clamped his hand over his scar which had suddenly begun to throb painfully. The pain didn't slow down either. It only deepened until he was sure that his scar had split open. He took his hand from his forehead, fully expecting to see blood pouring from between his fingers. However, his fingers were clean.

"ENOUGH!" Dumbledore bellowed in anger and reared up to show his full authority. "Let the boy be!"

Instead of recoiling in fear from Dumbledore's outburst, the Death Eater threw his head back and laughed heartily. The pain in Neville's scar mellowed into a dull throb. "Poor, little Boy Who Lived ... He still doesn't know," the Death Eater cooed. Dumbledore momentarily panicked, thinking that he would spill the beans before he could properly explain things to Neville.

"I said enough," Dumbledore glared as the Death Eater continued to chuckle happily. "We will not be offering any of our souls. The Death Eaters' souls should be more than enough for you," he told him.

"They are not yours to bargain with, Albus Dumbledore," his raspy voice stated. The sound alone grated on their nerves. "You have always been the one to gamble with souls that do not belong to you ... but not this time, Albus."

Dumbledore did not like what he was hinting at. He definitely didn't want any of his secrets getting out. "Is there nothing else that you want from us?" he asked desperately. He could feel the magic holding the conversation together becoming frayed. The being didn't answer right away. They sat there waiting in complete silence until finally, the being spoke.

"For the completion of your contract, I will take something from each of you ... Something you hold dear ... That is my fee," the Death Eater wheezed. His body was beginning to break down.

"Not our souls?" Dumbledore asked to make absolutely sure. You couldn't trust these demons. "Or the souls of our loved ones?"

"I will take no souls from you or from those that you love," he replied in a humorous voice. "My word has been given."

Dumbledore looked around at the group questioningly who continued to keep their mouths shut. He assumed that they agreed with the price, but even if they didn't, he still would have agreed. This was much more important than any of them. Besides, the demon already agreed to spare their souls. Everything else was a pittance in comparison. He himself had sacrificed so much. What was a little bit more?

"I agree to your fee," Dumbledore stated.

“And the rest?” the Death Eater asked, looking from face to face. They all slowly nodded. “Then so be it!” he exclaimed.

The entire group screamed in pain as blood misted from their palms. The red mist floated to the center of the circle where it scribbled each of their names in blood on the contract. The Death Eater scribbled an unknown name on it before dropping to the ground, motionless. The contract, however, remained floating in the center of the circle. Below it, the ground began to rumble right before a fissure appeared. A crack in the ground formed right underneath the Death Eater’s body. They could see orange and yellow lights emanating from the crack as it grew. Smoke and steam spewed from the crack, and before long, it was wide enough that the Death Eater’s butt sank down into it. Only his thighs and back were keeping him from falling in. His eyes were dead-looking and unseeing. The fissure widened with a loud groan, and the body slipped further in. Now only his feet, arms, and head were above the line of sight. The light from within was getting brighter. With one last crack, the hole broke open further, and the body fell in.

The group watched on, horrified by what they were seeing. They had hoped that this was the end of it, but then they saw flayed and charred human arms erupt from the hole. Their fingers were splayed open wide as they bent down and pawed at the ground. Then the screams came. They weren’t screams of pain, no. They were screams of torment. They were the wails of the tortured souls. The hands gripped the grass tightly as they desperately attempted to pull themselves from the hole. One pulled her way up until she was able to rest her chin on the grass. Breathing heavily, she looked at the Weasleys and yelled, “MOLLY!”

Molly Weasley flinched. She recognized the burned corpse immediately. It was her grandmother. Her grandmother was a mean, hateful woman who almost no one liked. She always hated going over to visit the mad, old bat when she was a little kid. Her grandmother would often sit in her back garden and fire nasty curses at any garden gnomes that were unlucky enough to enter her yard. Now she was looking at her with wild eyes and a plea for help. A male arm rose from the hole and grabbed her grandmother by the back of her hair. The hand yanked hard causing her head to snap back painfully, and her grandmother was pulled back into the hole. She could see two large divots where tufts of grass were pulled from the ground as her grandmother frantically tried to keep herself out of the hole. Her terrified scream was loud as she fell back in but gradually quieted the lower she fell. The other hands retracted in a frightened manner, and then the fissure opened wide. More smoke and steam billowed from it, and they heard the sounds of thick, viscous liquid bubbling and churning. It was then that they knew where the lights were coming from. There was molten magma flowing in that hole. The thought was very unsettling to those who realized it.

Fire burst from the hole and grew until it was a massive pillar reaching high into the sky. The pillar of flames rotated counterclockwise like a tornado but it did not move. It stayed pinned to the spot, unmoving. To Hermione Granger, the sound was that of a jet engine roaring as the plane got ready to take off. Everyone flinched back from not only the deafening sound but also the intense heat. As the pillar grew, they were all forced to get up and take several steps back.

The bottom of the pillar broke free of the ground and twirled up into the air before finally fizzling out. What was left was not a gaping hole of hellfire, but a man standing tall and proud.

They all gawked at the man. They had been expecting some type of hideous creature, not a human ... especially a tall, handsome human with short, messy black hair and eyes that sparkled like glittering emeralds. On his well-built body was a form-fitting, black, muggle suit over a blood-red shirt. They all heard McGonagall gasp, and they turned in her direction. The old woman had her hand over her chest as she struggled for breath.

“J-James Potter?” she asked shakily. The man in black smiled wickedly.

“Not exactly,” he said, amused.

“Harry Potter?” Albus Dumbledore asked, gobsmacked. He looked like James but had the eyes of Lily. The young man’s eyes burned like glowing coals for a moment before going back to green.

“At your service,” he said, bowing flamboyantly with one hand across his waist while the other was stretched outward. As he did, massive, black-feathered wings burst from his back. All around them, birds scattered in every direction, not wanting to be anywhere near him.

“What the hell are you?” Nymphadora Tonks asked, looking at his shiny, black wings.

“I, my dear, am Satan ... And I am here to collect what is mine.”