

The Set-Up

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Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 18

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Sometimes, it takes a lot to open your eyes, you know? You go through so much in life, but it's so easy to go through it all blindly. But if you're lucky, one day you realize that what you want, what you need, has always been right in front of you, ready for you to realize it.

I took a drag of my cigarette and walked away, flicking the butt aimlessly toward the wet bushes. My girl was waiting for me up ahead, and I wasn't going to keep her waiting. Not anymore.

Chapter 1

Chapter 2 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

It all started over the summer.

I'd been an Auror for years by that point, although it felt like a lifetime. Still, nothing prepared me for what was about to happen.

July 12, 2007. The headline on the newspaper blared at me so loudly that I swear I thought I could hear it. TRAGIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS MALFOY, FAMILY.

I sat staring at the headline for minutes, my hand shaking momentarily as it brought my morning cig to my lips. With the first drag, though, business mode took over. I exhaled hastily, flipping the paper open to the article. Draco Malfoy, 27, his wife, Asteria, 25, and their one-year-old son, Scorpius (what the hell kind of a name that was I'd never know) had been vacationing in the south of France when their rented car exploded, killing them all instantaneously.

I sat back in my chair, blowing a fat trail of smoke out of the corner of my mouth, as I reread the article. The French Ministry claimed the horrible loss was the result of a manufacturer's defect – a faulty petrol line had caused the fuel to combust. They had no reason to suspect foul play, as their country was free of the prejudices that still haunted the Malfoy name in the UK, and stated for the record that they would work closely with any British investigation into the incident.

A knock at the door confirmed my gut feeling.

Gawain Robards, head of the Auror department, strode in, slapping a copy of the paper onto my desk.

"I see you've already seen this morning's news," he said grimly.

I nodded, stubbing out the last of my cig and running a hand through my hair. "I take it you want me to investigate?"

He nodded, exhaling. "Something's not right. You know it as well as I do. I don't care that the Malfoys have an estate down there – the Draco Malfoy we all knew wouldn't have been caught dead in a Muggle vehicle." Robards winced at his unintended and utterly distasteful turn of phrase. "I want you to take Weasley and Harcourt, maybe one other if they're discreet, and check this thing out. Carefully, mind you. We can't afford not to know if there's another lunatic out there thinking they're some new hero for taking down old Death Eaters."

I knew what he was talking about all too well. Ever since the war, there had been at least one incident a year where some maniac decided to play Potter and beat up some poor old sop with a funny tattoo. But at least four of those attacks had been on the Malfoy family.

"You got it, Robards," I said, and when he left, I sent a message to Ron.

The next day found us Flooing to the French Ministry.

"Ah, Messieurs Aurors," Marie-Claude Delalande, the French Ministre, greeted us immediately. "You understand the sensitivity of this matter, oui? Yes, I'm sure you do. All immediate evidence points toward an unfortunate accident, but because of who Mr. Malfoy is – was, we are more than happy to assist you in any way. The French people have held no ill will toward the Malfoy family, but if someone has caused this disaster, then we would like nothing more than for you to take them home with you."

Ron and I nodded in tandem, understanding at once what the Ministre was and was not saying. "We understand, Madame Ministre," Ron said. "With whom shall we be working?"

"Ah. Because of the nature of the incident, it has been investigated by our non-magical government as an accident but also as a possible terrorist threat. I am quite sure you will be able to navigate your way through the Muggle police reports, oui? You should report to them as soon as you can," she explained. "If you should require any of our assistance, you know how to find us. I trust that you will find what you are seeking with all due haste."

"Of course, Ministre Delalande," I said. "We will indeed."

Three days went by with us combing through French police documents, looking at pictures, twirling pens around our thumbs as we sat in on investigative meetings that led us nowhere. We scoured the crime scene looking for any possible clues, re-interviewed the scant few witnesses that had come forward, but all to little end. On the fourth day, we went back to the Ministry.

"Well?" Madame Ministre Delalande said impatiently.

"Definitely magical," I told her. "The Muggle police are baffled. There's no trace of any sort of bomb or accelerant anywhere, and for an explosion of that size, there would have to be."

"As I thought, but you do not know who did this," she stated.

"Not yet, Ministre," Ron answered. "But you were right before, Madame Ministre Delalande. No one in France would care enough about Malfoy's past to target his family. This has to be the work of someone from England. Someone with a grudge."

"I think you should allow your people to believe that it was a fluke, a Muggle bomb that unfortunately got the wrong target," I said. "We'll go back to our Ministry and continue the investigation from there, and if everyone thinks we're not pursuing it further, they might slip up. We'll find them."

"See that you do. And if we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us," she said. "Au revoir, Messieurs Aurors."

Chapter 2

Chapter 3 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Ron and I attended the funeral – hidden in the back, of course. Nothing seemed amiss, although Narcissa Malfoy was curiously absent. Lucius acted the properly grieving father. Ron overheard him explaining that Narcissa had taken the loss of her only son and grandson very hard and was now unable to leave her home. Few others bothered to show up – certainly no one who appeared out of place.

Another week went by with no further information. I sat at my desk, feet propped up on one corner and a cig in my hand, poring over the crime scene photos for the millionth time. I had seen grislier images in my lifetime, to be sure, but there was something about seeing a one-year-old child lying dead in the street that shook me to my core. Malfoy or no Malfoy, no child deserved to die like that.

A knock at my door startled me. "Come in, Robards, but I've got nothing new for you," I called.

But it wasn't Robards at the door.

"Tonks!" I said with some surprise. I rarely got to see her anymore; I could barely tell you when I last saw Remus. It had been ... hard ... for me when they split up after the war, but I should have made more of an effort to see them. To see Teddy. My lip curled in self-reproach.

"Harry," she sobbed, rushing in. "Harry, he's ..." She sank to her knees next to me, her unusually dull brown hair contrasting with a face red from crying.

"Teddy," I whispered, reaching out and gathering her into a hug. "What happened?"

"He's at St. Mungo's," her voice caught in the back of her throat. "They think he was poisoned – they're not sure if he's ... Harry, he's my baby!"

I had felt fear in my life, but it had been years since I had felt my heart pound, my muscles constrict, my pulse race like that.

"Start from the beginning," I ordered.

Between sobs, Tonks told me that she had come home from her shift a bit earlier than normal only to find Teddy lying unconscious on his bedroom floor. She had grabbed him and Apparated to St. Mungo's, and then, once she had known he was stable, she had come here. "Harry, you've got to help me – I've got no one else to turn to," she cried. "Who would want to kill my baby?"

"And you're sure they said it was poison? He couldn't have gotten into something around the house, nothing that he could have accidentally eaten, drunk?"

"No, no, he's nine years old. He knows better, and you know him – he's smart as a whip. He wouldn't take something from someone he didn't know, and for most of the day he has a sitter with him. He was at home for Merlin's sake! Someone had to come into my home!" Tonks was shaking in fury in my arms, rage and fear emanating from her in waves. The lights in my office flickered.

"Yeah, I know," I said. "We'll figure it out, Tonks. I promise." The Malfoy case would have to wait. No one hurts my family and gets away with it.

I visited Teddy that night in hospital. He looked so small in the oversized bed, his hair a dull replica of his mother's. The mediwitches had confirmed their earlier suspicions that evening – he had, in fact, ingested a lethal dosage of poison, and if Tonks hadn't found him when she did, he probably would not have survived.

I sat outside with Tonks after they told us. For once, she accepted my offer of a cigarette, and from afar it would have seemed to any passerby that we were just two friends having a smoke. But one look at her face told a different story.

"Someone tried to kill my son, Harry. What kind of bloody fucking toerag of a wizard would want to kill my son? Why? What possible threat is he to someone? He's never been in trouble a day in his life, never pissed anyone off. Everyone loves him – everyone," she ranted, her face contorted with anger. Underneath the pale glow of the street lamp, I could see her hair flickering, changing colors with blinding speed.

"Maybe it's not about him," I said, gazing steadily at her.

"You ... you think this is about me," Tonks said.

"You can't think of anyone that would want to get back at you by hurting him?" I asked.

"You can't possibly think that ... that Remus did this!" She gasped, going still.

To tell you the truth, that thought hadn't occurred to me, but it said something that it had occurred to her, so I let her finish. "Couldn't I?" I asked.

"Harry, things may have ended pretty bloody painfully, but that was years ago. I'm over it. I thought he was over it too. And as far as I can tell, he's been a bloody good father to Teddy," she grated.

"So, you don't think he could do this, then," I said quietly.

"He's the father of my child," she spat. "As many times as we've fought with each other, maybe even hated each other at times, he could never do this. Not to Teddy. And not to me."

I nodded carefully. "I didn't think so, but I had to ask."

"I know, Harry," she sighed. "I'm an Auror too, remember."

"That's kind of what I was trying to say a minute ago," I responded. "Any recent cases go pear-shaped, anyone you've convicted get out of Azkaban lately? Anyone that would want a bit of revenge on you?"

She sat there thinking, her cig burning down to ash in her uncaring fingers. A gust of wind ruffled her hair. I reached up to fix it.

Her empty eyes came to stare back at me. "I can't think of anyone, Harry. You know I deal mostly with the little stuff these days. Didn't want to risk getting hurt on the job as long as I had Teddy at home full-time. No one's going to come after me because I caught them stealing candy in Hogsmeade, and no one from the ... old days ... is around anymore. Not really."

I sighed. Maybe she was right, but something just didn't sit well with me. "Alright then. We'll start fresh in the morning. You need to come home with me and get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow I want you to go through everything in your house. Anything Teddy could have touched, eaten, drunk, smelled, looked at – anything that seems out of place – you bring that to me, and no one else. Here, give me your babysitter's name and information. I'll look into them tomorrow too."

Tonks nodded wordlessly, writing down the name and address of one Cecily Abbott, Hannah Abbott Longbottom's niece. Slowly, we stood up, every joint in our bodies popping simultaneously from a day's worth of tension, and walked back inside St. Mungo's to Floo home.

Chapter 3

Chapter 4 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

I got Tonks properly settled in at Grimmauld Place, a dram of Ogden's Old and one more cigarette edging her toward sleep. Once she was comfortable upstairs, I sat on the couch in the living room, sipping my own Firewhisky and looking at Cecily Abbott's name. I'd met her once or twice down at the Leaky. Nice girl, if a bit vacuous, but Hannah had bragged about her ability in Potions a few times.

I knew it was late, but it couldn't wait. Grabbing a bunch of Floo powder, I stuck my head into the fireplace and called out "The Leaky Cauldron."

"Harry?" Neville's face appeared in front of me.

"Hey, Neville," I apologized. "I know it's late, but I just have a quick question. Is Cecily with you?"

"Of course. She's been here since the end of the lunch rush, just like usual. Why? Is something wrong?" Hannah's face appeared beside Neville's.

"Just checking. Listen, will you be around tomorrow? I need to stop by. And make sure Cecily's there."

"Sure, of course. We'll be here all day," they said, and with a pop, I pulled my head out of the Floo. Seems her story checked out. For the life of me, I couldn't think of a single reason why she'd want to hurt Teddy. Waving my hand, I reset my wards and went upstairs.

In the morning, Tonks stumbled blearily downstairs. I hadn't slept much, despite a second Firewhisky and a halfway decent wank. I had her tea ready for her.

"Irish Breakfast," she said, a ghost of a smile on her face. "You remembered."

"Old routines die hard," I grunted, pushing the milk and sugar toward her as though we were doing nothing but preparing for another Order meeting. I downed my own cup, hissing as the strong brew burned my tongue. "You remember what to do when you get home?"

"I've done this before, Harry, just ... not for myself, y'know?" she whispered.

"Just checking." I poured out another cup for myself, stirring in some extra sugar and a dollop of milk. "I'm going to pop over to the Leaky and check on Cecily today. When you're done cataloguing your house, come meet me at my office. But if anything important comes up, you send me a Patronus straightaway, alright?"

"Harry, Cecily's lovely. Teddy really likes her ... has a bit of a crush, if you ask me. She might not be the brightest girl, but she's genuinely sweet," Tonks said.

"And you know as well as I do that anyone even close to being involved has to at least be questioned, if not formally investigated," I replied.

"I know that," Tonks said tersely. "I just can't believe she'd have something against Teddy. Or me."

"Yeah, well, let's just take things one step at a time. Now go home and see what you can find, alright? I'll send Ron over to help you out."

"Thanks, Harry. I'll see you this afternoon," she said and Apparated to her house.

I grabbed a piece of toast off the rack and Flooed Ron quickly. Once he was on his way to Tonks's, I headed to the Leaky.

"Harry, thank goodness," Hannah greeted me as I stumbled out of their Floo. "We've been worrying all night. Why on earth were you asking about Cecily?"

"Sorry, Hannah. Neville," I said as Neville joined us, wiping his hands off on a bar towel. "Look, is there somewhere we can go that's a bit more private?"

Once we were safely ensconced in their back room, I motioned for them to sit down. My fingers were itching for a fag, but it would have to wait. "I don't want to keep you; I know you have to get ready for lunch. I just need to ask you a few questions."

"Of course," Neville said.

"How long has Cecily been sitting for Teddy Lupin?"

"Teddy? About two years, I suppose, just during her breaks from school. She started when she was fourteen, and she'll be sixteen next month. Is everything alright?" Hannah asked, rubbing her hands together nervously.

"Has she ever complained about it? About Teddy, or Tonks for that matter? Ever given you any reason to suspect that things may not be going well there? That he was giving her trouble?"

"Cecily dotes on him, Harry. Just adores him, and he likes her right back. He's come here with Tonks on occasion to visit, and he just runs straight into her arms. He's a bit more bashful about it now that he's getting older, but the affection's still there," Hannah said with a smile.

"Yeah, Harry, she's always talking about how much fun they have whenever she sits for him," Neville agreed. "She can never get over how much control he has over his 'morphing. It's always 'today Teddy did this,' or 'today Teddy did that'."

"And was yesterday any different?" I pressed.

"Not that she mentioned, no," Neville said, looking at Hannah for confirmation. "She was back here by three-ish, just like always." Hannah nodded.

"Why doesn't she stay until Tonks gets home? Isn't that a bit odd?"

"She used to, when Teddy was younger," Hannah explained. "But Teddy was complaining that he was too old to need a sitter all day long, so Tonks said that he could have the last hour to himself, as long as he followed their ground rules. Cecily worried about it at first, that maybe something would happen after she left, but they've been on this routine now since she was last home over the winter hols, and it's never been a problem."

I sighed. Well, at least her leaving early was explained. "Could you ask her to come in here, please?"

"Harry, what on earth is going on?" Hannah asked worriedly. "All these questions ... is Cecily in trouble? What happened?"

"Hold on, here she comes now," Neville said. He motioned Cecily in and pulled up a chair next to them.

I threw Neville and Hannah a pointed glance, hoping they'd keep quiet for a moment, and then turned to face Cecily. "Hi, Cecily. Remember me? Auror Potter?"

"Of course, sir, everyone knows who you are," she said with a smile.

My jaw clenched involuntarily. "Look, Cecily, you were sitting for Teddy Lupin yesterday, yeah?"

"Sure. I was there from nine til about three or so when I came back here," she answered readily.

"Was everything normal? I mean, did anything out of the ordinary happen?"

Her brow furrowed. "I don't ... think so, sir," she responded slowly.

"You're not sure if anything unusual happened?" I asked skeptically.

"No ... I mean, I can't ... it's so strange, Mr. Potter! I remember getting there, I remember playing in the morning, I remember fixing lunch ... but all of a sudden I can't remember anything about the afternoon!" Cecily said in a panicky voice, her eyes growing wide. "Aunt Hannah, why can't I remember?"

"Cecily, can you remember coming back here to the Leaky?"

"Yes! I can remember Flooing back here just fine," she said, eyes filling with tears. "But I can't remember anything between lunch and then!"

"You're sure you don't remember anything? No one suspicious came by, no odd food or drink in the house, no unusual Floo calls or owls?"

"No. No, I can't remember anything!" Cecily began to cry in earnest. "I would have remembered if I had blacked out or something ... but I didn't know I couldn't remember until just now! What's happening?"

I looked up at Hannah and Neville grimly. They were staring at Cecily in shock, Hannah wrapping her arms around her niece to comfort her.

"Harry, what in Merlin's name is going on?" Neville demanded.

"Teddy was poisoned yesterday," I said quietly. "He's at St. Mungo's. They're not sure if he'll survive. If Tonks hadn't come home early ..."

Cecily gasped and began wailing. "No! No, Aunt Hannah, Uncle Neville, I didn't do it! I swear, I couldn't have done it ... could I? No ... I love Teddy, Mr. Potter, you have to believe me. I'd never hurt him, I promise!"

"Shh, Cecily," Hannah said. "We believe you. We know how much you care for Teddy."

"Someone must have done something to her, Harry," Neville said earnestly. "There's just no way that she could have done this. Please believe us. It's just not Cecily."

"I'm inclined to believe you, really," I told Neville. "But what will help the most is if you go to St. Mungo's immediately and get her checked out, alright? Have the mediwizards do a full body scan, test for any Dark spellwork, Memory Charms, hexes, as well as potions or even poisons. Don't let them skimp on anything. If someone were after Teddy so badly, they may have done something to her to incapacitate her."

Hannah gasped, her hands flying up to cover her mouth. "Come on, Cecily, let's go," Neville said. "We can close the Leaky for the day. Harry, you'll hear from us the minute we know anything. Please, just believe us. It couldn't have been her."

I nodded, my fingers tapping impatiently on my leg. "Get her checked out, and let me know everything they have to say. We'll figure out what happened, I promise you."

Chapter 4

Chapter 5 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

After seeing them Floo off to St. Mungo's, I turned over the "Open" sign on the front door so that it said "Closed" and Apparated back to my office. I sat in my chair, taking a drag of my first cig of the day as though it were Felix Felicis. My eyes closed, and I mentally sifted through all the information I had thus far. One: someone was after Teddy, or Tonks. Probably Tonks. And if they were willing to sacrifice a child, the person either had a really, really big problem with Tonks, or they were insane, or both. Two: that someone was most likely not Cecily. However good she was at Potions, a sixteen-year-old girl at today's Voldemort-free Hogwarts wouldn't have the means to concoct such a dangerous brew. Besides, there was just no motive. No problems with Tonks or Teddy, no financial or personal gain, and even if she were slightly less intelligent about things, she would have known she would be the first the Aurors would suspect. Three: whoever this someone was, they knew the ins and outs of Tonks' arrangement with Cecily. They acted quickly and efficiently enough so that if Tonks had maintained her normal routine, she would have come home to find her son dead on the floor.

I finished off the last of my cigarette, grinding the butt into the overfull ashtray on my desk before vanishing the contents with a flick of my wrist. Wiping my face with my hand, I leaned forward on my elbows, dropping my feet to the ground. *Nothing to do now but wait*, I grimaced to myself.

It wasn't until after I had finished a particularly greasy curry from the shop down the street that I had more news. Tonks came in, but one look at her dejected face and I knew she hadn't found anything.

"Anything out of the ordinary?"

She shook her head no. "Not a bloody blasted thing. I turned my house inside out, Harry, and all I managed to find was Teddy's stash of Honeydukes chocolate bars. There isn't a single thing in my kitchen that I didn't buy myself. Nothing that Cecily brought with her, no takeaway, nothing. I tested it all myself, and there are no charms, hexes, or added ingredients in anything. I examined all of his toys, books, and clothes. Ron and I ran diagnostics on all the furniture, on the grounds, on my Floo ... Merlin, Harry, it doesn't even look like anyone else has even set foot in the house!" She groaned then, a long moan of frustration and pent-up anger.

"Tonks, we're going to find them," I said in a voice that would chip diamonds. "Believe you me, I will not rest until we know who hurt him."

She smiled at that, but it was a fierce, feral smile. "I know, Harry. That's why I came to you ... because neither one of us will ever give up."

I reached out and took her hand. It was smaller than I remembered, but then again, I'd grown up since last I held her hand. "Too fucking right you are, Tonks. Cig?"

She shook her head no. "I'm going to go sit with Teddy a while, see if the blokes at St. Mungo's have turned up any news about what kind of poison was used, where it came from. See you later?"

"Of course."

My hand tingled for an hour after she left. Robards popped in once, asking about Teddy. He was appropriately sympathetic, but I knew he was dying to remind me not to forget about the Malfoy case. But that would just have to wait.

Two hours later, I had no further news. Nothing from Tonks, nothing from Cecily, and nothing about the Malfoys. Leaving a stack of paperwork on my desk for tomorrow, I went over to Ron's office, but he was out on another investigation, so I decided to leave for the day. Flooing over to St. Mungo's, I paused, then decided to check on Tonks

first.

"Any news on Teddy?" I asked quietly, sitting down next to her on the bench outside of his room.

"They're running some more tests now," she said huskily, clearing her throat. "Anything on your end?"

I shook my head no. "Listen, I'm going to go check something out. Want some tea when I get back?" Tonks bobbed her head once, which I took for a yes, and so I took off for the Spell Damage wing upstairs on the fourth floor.

As luck would have it, Hannah and Neville were still there, sitting in the lobby. Walking over, I sat down across from them. "What's the latest?" I asked.

Hannah looked over at me tearily. "They said that she was hit by a very powerful Memory Charm but they can't figure out who did it," she said, looking up at Neville gratefully as he wrapped his arm around her.

"They've been questioning her and testing her for hours," Neville said tiredly. "But they can't restore the missing time. All she can recall is that she was cleaning up after lunch, and then things went black. They think that maybe she was confined somewhere dark, like a closet, or simply knocked out, but she doesn't show any physical damage, thank Merlin."

"Well, that's good news at least," I said, torn between relief and anger that someone had used the girl to get to Tonks.

"I don't know that I'd call it 'good' news, but at least it's better than it could have been," Hannah said. "I just can't believe this happened. I promised my sister I'd take care of her, and now here we are at St. Mungo's, finding out someone's destroyed part of her memory."

"Hannah, Neville, this isn't your fault," I said perhaps a bit too loudly. "At least we know she didn't do this to Teddy. And hopefully, the mediwizards will be able to restore her memory, and she'll be able to tell us who did this to her. But if not, rest assured we will figure it out."

But by the end of that week, nothing new had come to light. Teddy was stable, but comatose. The mediwizards were of the opinion that the poison, whatever it was, would just have to work its way out of his system on his own, but they had no idea how long that could take. Tonks was free to go home and straighten up, Ron and the other Aurors having completed their investigation of the crime scene. Cecily was also free to go home, but the mediwizards involved in her case had not been able to determine a way to restore those precious missing hours. Still, the Memory Charm had no lasting side effects, and otherwise she was perfectly healthy. In other words, I had absolutely no leads.

Chapter 5

Chapter 6 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

August rolled by. Robards continuously plagued me for new information on the Malfoy case, but there simply was nothing to go on. The opinion that it had been a magical assassination was just that an opinion and aside from the sheer lack of evidence pointing to a Muggle bomb, there was nothing to use to determine who could have done it. Unlike Teddy's situation, there were too many people who might be happy to see the Malfoys dead just for being Malfoys and plenty of people who could tangentially profit from their deaths, so motives abounded. But without the physical evidence to trace magical signatures, it was all but impossible to determine what kind of spell was used to blow up the car. The only odd thing about the entire situation was the fact that they were in a car to begin with.

I tapped the tip of my wand against my teeth. If there wasn't enough car left to examine, maybe it was high time that I started working things from the other end, so to speak. Maybe it was high time I began acquainting myself with Draco Malfoy.

I spent the next week gathering every single shred of information I could find on the post-war Malfoy family. It wasn't much; they had mostly kept to themselves once the trials were over, but anything I could use to construct a character profile would help. What I found surprised me, but then again, I suppose never having known him well, anything would have surprised me.

It seemed as though Draco had married Asteria Greengrass the year after she graduated from Hogwarts, and in 2006, she had given birth to their son. That much was easily obtained from newspapers. Asteria apparently had been something of a housewife; at least, I had never found anything to suggest that she had held a job outside of the home. But Draco, interestingly, had gone into potions work. I remembered quite well that he had always succeeded in Potions class, but I always remembered it as him having curried favor with Snape, not that he had been particularly apt at the subject. I suppose I had been wrong. But rather than teach at Hogwarts and it appeared he had actually been offered the position once by Professor McGonagall before her death he opted to go into research, expanding the laboratory at Malfoy Manor and working from home. His developments had been implemented both at St. Mungo's and in the greater medical field. *Perhaps Asteria had been his assistant, or maybe partner*, I thought to myself.

He was fairly respected in the field and made a decent living, but it was nothing compared to the wealth that the Malfoys had flaunted prior to the war. They had barely been able to hang onto the Manor after the trials left Lucius and Narcissa practically impoverished, so it was a bit of a surprise to learn that Draco had saved enough to buy back the family estate in southern France only last year. For all I knew, it may have been the first time Draco had ever been able to take his family there to visit.

Lucius and Narcissa had retired to the Manor after the war, rarely being seen in public. They barely socialized, not deigning to make social connections outside of their former circles, yet unwilling to keep associations with those who had received the more public punishments during the trials. Since the accident, only Lucius had been seen, and even then it was only the occasional excursion to Diagon Alley. Narcissa, it seemed, was devastated by the loss and had completely cloistered herself at the Manor.

But as interesting as the lives and times of the Malfoy family were turning out to be, they simply did not explain why anyone would target Draco, or rather, give any leads as to who might have killed him and his family. He didn't have the Malfoy wealth, his son and heir was killed with him, and his career wasn't a threat to anyone. The potions work he had been doing was largely theoretical, and those who made use of his findings were doing so in the hopes of developing experimental cures for diseases and disorders, not for developing poisons or weapons.

I reported all of this to Robards, of course, and while he was also interested at first, even he had to admit after a few weeks had passed that none of it was the grand clue we had all hoped for. And more frustratingly, there was absolutely no change in Teddy's condition. Tonks had long since returned to work, trying to distract herself from the lack of new information, but I knew her too well to believe for a second that it was working.

So, it was a bit of a shock to me one morning in late September, almost two months after Teddy's poisoning, when Tonks stormed into my office and slammed something

down in front of me on my desk.

"There! There!" she fumed, pointing to the paper. Grabbing my lit cig out of my hand, she puffed furiously on it, stopping only long enough to let out a giant hacking cough. Her hair was a vibrant, furious red.

"Sit down, Tonks, before you hurt yourself," I said, snatching the paper off of my desk and scanning it. My eyes widened.

"Tonks, where did you get this? And why on earth are you giving it to me?" I exclaimed, cursing silently under my breath and dropping the paper to my desk. Shite. Shite. Shite.

"It was slipped under my door this morning. Harry, I have wards. I have wards that only recognize a handful of people. Someone was there ... someone knows how to get to me," she said, her words falling over each other in their effort to get out.

The paper clearly said, "I know where to find you. One day all you have will be mine."

"I always figured someone had hurt Teddy to get to me, but now ... now it's real, Harry. Someone's after me and I don't know why," she said, her voice escalating until she was practically screaming.

"Tonks, who else knows about this letter?" I asked firmly, sliding the paper carefully into an empty folder with the tip of my quill.

"No one. I came straight here. Apparated here immediately," she responded.

"Good," I exhaled. "The first thing we do is show it to Robards. He needs to know that you're being threatened. We'll get some Aurors to guard you at all times. And for now, at least, you'll need to go on leave. It's not safe for you to be out in the field," I stated.

"I ... I don't want to go back there," she muttered. "I can't."

"Then you're coming home with me," I said. "No ifs, ands, or buts about it."

We briefed Robards, who agreed that she shouldn't work until whoever was threatening her was caught. He assigned Ron and another Auror named White to be her own personal guards and sent the letter off for testing. But as soon as we were done talking with him, I took her arm. "Come on, let's go back to your place."

"Harry, I told you, I don't want to go back there," Tonks stated flatly.

"I know that, but we need to get your things. I'll be right there with you. And besides, we need to make sure that we double-check the premises, see if anything else was left there, and change your wards, alright?" I reassured her.

"Yeah, I suppose so," she nodded and sighed. "Now or never, eh, Harry?" A split second later we were standing in her kitchen.

I quickly glanced around her house. "Anything look out of place?"

"No, everything seems just as I left it. Sorry for the mess, though. Haven't had much energy to ... do things lately," she said, hurriedly sweeping a pile of dirty dishes into the sink.

"Alright. I'm going to reset your wards, and then I think you should go pack up whatever you think you might need for a week or two. I'll be right down here waiting for you," I said.

"Thanks, Harry." She walked past me to head upstairs, stopping to press a kiss to my cheek.

Muttering a few diagnostic spells, I saw that her wards had in fact been breached, but why no alarms had gone off was a mystery to me. Quickly I changed her wards to a variant of my own, setting them to allow only Teddy, Tonks, myself, Ron, and Auror White. If she decided she was more comfortable staying here, then only those who were supposed to protect her could come in. Anyone else would set off an alarm that would wake the dead. I smiled grimly.

"Ready, Harry," Tonks said, holding a small trunk.

"Okay, then. Hold on tight," I said. Grabbing her arm, I Apparated her home with me.

Chapter 6

Chapter 7 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

It didn't take her long to get unpacked; all she had brought with her was a few changes of clothes, some toiletries, and a book or two. Coming downstairs, she found me cooking up some dinner.

"Merlin, Harry, that smells delicious," she said, sitting down exhaustedly at the kitchen. "Can I help?"

"Sure. You can start by pouring yourself a big glass of red wine over there and trying to relax a bit," I said. "Pour one for me, too, while you're at it. Spaghetti alright?"

"Right now I'd eat chocolate-covered dog shite, I'm that hungry, so yeah, spaghetti is perfect. Never would have taken you for a chef, though," Tonks said.

"When you live alone ... or live with Ron for that matter," I said wryly, stirring the sauce, "you learn to cook or you starve. Not saying it's gourmet but it'll get you through til tomorrow." I pushed up my sleeves, dishing up two giant plates of pasta and spooning a thick red sauce otop.

"Tuck in," I said, placing it in front of her. We ate in silence for a few minutes, but soon the air grew heavy with unspoken words.

"Tonks, I hate to do it, but you know I have to ask you some more questions about that letter," I said, wiping sauce off the edge of my mouth.

"Yeah, I know. Go ahead," she said, still working her way through her plate of food.

"So the letter ... you said you found it inside your front door. Someone slid it underneath, right?"

She nodded yes.

"And no alarm went off on your wards. No sign of someone foreign to them coming there?"

"Not a thing. I know how to set wards, Harry. Nothing happened," she said, pouring us both another glass of wine.

"Okay. Tell me everyone that your wards allowed," I said.

"Me and Teddy, of course. Remus. You. Ron and Hermione. Cecily, and Hannah and Neville from when they used to bring her over. That's pretty much it, I think, for those that had regular access," Tonks mused. "And Mum ... until last year, that is," she said quietly.

"You didn't change the wards after Andromeda died?" I asked quietly. Andromeda's death last March hadn't been a total surprise; she'd been frail ever since the war. But even Teddy handled it better than Tonks had. She'd been inconsolable for weeks. It had been one of the few occasions when I had spent any real length of time with her and Teddy since she split up with Remus. I sneered inwardly at myself. Some godfather, some fucking friend I'd turned out to be.

"No. Didn't ... didn't want to at first. Then sort of figured there was no fucking point," Tonks answered bitterly.

"Probably doesn't matter," I said, but I tucked that information inside a pocket in my mind for later. "The wording of the letter ... does that mean anything to you? Sound like anyone you know?"

"Believe me, Harry, I don't have anything that anyone would want ... except Teddy, and clearly whoever is after me doesn't want him. I keep thinking about it, but I have no idea what it means," she said tiredly, wiping a hand across her pinched eyes.

I watched her for a second, mulling things over, then came to a decision. "Look, you're exhausted, and I can't think of anything else to ask you right now. You want to turn in early?"

"Oh, no, at least let me clean up in here as thanks for your hospitality," she said anxiously.

"No way," I said. "I like cleaning up the Muggle way. Gives me time to think after a long day. Go on, I'll be fine."

"Well, if you're sure," she said, getting up from the table and carrying her plate to the sink.

"Out, out, out," I said, waving a dishtowel toward her rear playfully.

She stopped by the doorway, looking at me thoughtfully. "Thanks, Harry. Had I known all of this would be so much trouble for you ..." She walked over beside me. "You're a good friend." Looking me straight in the eyes, she bent over and kissed me. "See you in the morning."

I stood there by the sink, listening to the sound of her footsteps slowly disappearing up the stairs. It wasn't for a full five minutes that I realized I was stroking my thumb across my lip. Shaking myself awake, I turned to the dishes with a sigh. Something about this whole mess just didn't feel right.

*I know where to find you. One day all you have will be mine.*The words of the letter repeated through my head over and over like a skip on an old, dusty record.

*All you have ... all you have ...*But what did she have? Tonks was right. She'd never been wealthy; what she did earn was just enough to keep her and Teddy afloat and still save up for Hogwarts expenses. She got nothing of monetary value from Andromeda. No family heirlooms, no property, nothing that anyone could think was worth all this trouble. And then there was Teddy. It would be different if someone had threatened him, or kidnapped him, but the plain fact was that someone tried to kill him. What could anyone want from Tonks?

Pouring myself two fingers of Ogden's Old and tamping down a fresh packet of cigs, I settled myself on the couch in the living room. I swirled the amber liquid around in the glass, mesmerized by the trails of droplets falling down the side, and inhaled that beautiful first lungful.

I know where to find you. One day all you have will be mine.

Blowing a steady stream of smoke out of my nostrils, I sat up. "It's one person," I said to myself. "It's just one person. An individual, not a group of people." I wasn't sure why, but somehow I knew that was important. But no other revelations followed.

I headed upstairs for the evening. As I jacked myself off in bed, I thought of soft lips on mine.

Chapter 7

Chapter 8 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Tonks wanted a bit of a lie-in the next morning, so I left her some tea and toast under a warming charm on the counter and headed off to work a bit early. But before I headed to my office, I stopped by to see Robards.

"Any details on Tonks's letter, sir?" I asked, popping my head into his doorway and catching his eye.

"Ah, Potter, come in," he said, motioning me toward a chair. "I was just about to stop by and see if you were in yet. Tell me, what did Tonks say about this letter?"

Briefly I sketched out the story that Tonks had given me. He held my glance for a minute, then dropped them to his desk, where the letter was encased in a protective charm. "Seems whoever wrote this knows Tonks fairly well, wouldn't you say?"

"I don't know, sir," I answered. "It certainly seems like they are after something specific, but neither Tonks nor I can figure out what it is. She's got nothing of value, no

hidden valuables or assets."

Robards hummed under his breath, then looked up at me intently. "You're Teddy's godfather, are you not?"

"Yes, sir," I said. His tone of voice took me aback. "Are you ... accusing me of something?"

"No, no," he said placatingly. "Just curious. How is the lad, anyway?"

"Nothing new," I answered. "He's still in a coma. We can only hope that the poison will work its way through his system, or that the mediwizards will figure out what it is so that they can create an antidote."

"Well, I am sorry to hear that," Robards said, "both for Tonks's sake and your own."

"I appreciate that," I said. "Was there any other information for me about the letter, sir?"

"No, I'm afraid whoever wrote it was very careful," Robards explained. "The handwriting looks like it might be from a Quick-Quotes Quill. Very generic, nothing that could be used to pinpoint an individual. And the only fingerprints found on it are Tonks's and yours."

"I see," I said. "Thank you for the information, sir. Let me know if anything else turns up."

"Count on it, Potter," Robards said. As I left his office, I felt his eyes watching me.

I took lunch at home so that I could share Robards's information with Tonks. As we plowed into two plates of reheated stew, I relayed what I had learned ... and what I suspected. "Seems like they didn't find anything on the letter to go on," I said around a mouthful of vegetables. "Just the likelihood that the perpetrator used a Quick-Quotes Quill or something that would disguise their handwriting."

"Bollocks," Tonks mumbled, swallowing a spoonful of potato. "Not that I was really expecting anything else, but I'd hoped ..."

I hesitated, feeling the weight of my words in my mouth, debating whether to share them. *Bloody hell, it's Tonks*, I thought. *She deserved to know*. "Tonks, whoever's behind this ... well, the letter clearly states that it's just one person. Robards thinks that it's someone who knows you really well, someone who thinks you've got something they want."

"Yeah, I would have thought that was fairly obvious," she said, sipping her tea.

"Tonks, I think Robards suspects me," I said.

"What? That's fucking ridiculous, Harry," she said, staring at me. "You're not the only one that knows me, and you bloody well know I've got nothing anyone would want." She blushed, her eyes falling down toward her lap.

"I know that. But mine are the only other fingerprints on that letter, and I'm Teddy's godfather."

"What the hell does that have to do with anything? Robards could never believe that you'd kill your own bloody godson," she spat.

"You'd think, wouldn't you," I said neutrally. "I'm glad you don't think it could be me."

"Of course not," she said, staring me in the eye.

"Alright then," I replied, a faint smile tweaking the corners of my mouth. "I've got to get back to work, but I should be home at the normal time, unless something comes up. What's for dinner?"

"You're going to sit down and let me cook, or do something," Tonks said, a hint of fire in her voice. "I cannot bloody sit still around here all day and then have you wait on me when you get home."

"Fine," I said. "You won't hear me complain. There should be plenty of groceries here already, but if you need me to pick something up on the way home, just send an owl or something. Got to run."

I'm not sure why, but I leaned over the table and pecked her quickly before heading to the Floo.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Five minutes later found me not in St. Mungo's but in Robards' office, Ron standing at my side.

"Potter, sit down and start talking," Robards said gruffly.

"Not until you tell me what happened to Tonks," I said fiercely. "Is she alright? Where is she?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to answer some of my questions first," he replied. "When did you last see her?"

"About ten, eleven o'clock last night," I said. "She's been staying with me since the letter, but last night ... she decided she would rather stay at home."

"Oh? And just what would bring on such a sudden change of heart?" he asked.

"That's personal, sir," I replied, fists clenching in my lap.

"Nothing right now is personal, Potter," he said. "Answer the question."

"Fine. We ... we were getting closer, and I think that startled her." I fumbled for the right words. "I had no problem with it, but I think somewhere in her head she remembers a younger me. Maybe she thought she was taking advantage or something, but when she realized what we were doing, she freaked out and Flooded home before I could stop her."

"And you didn't see fit to go after her?" Robards queried.

"No," I answered. "I didn't think that would be appropriate. I thought she just needed some space, a chance to clear her head, and she would be back. She knows it's not safe out there ..." I shook my head, trying to concentrate. "I was up all night hoping she would come back, but she didn't. I thought Ron was her this morning when he Flooded in, but ..."

"Can anyone else vouch for your whereabouts last night?" he asked.

"I just told you, I was with Tonks, and then ... I wasn't. I didn't leave the house. You can check the Floo records if you want, but no, no one saw me. I was alone all night until Ron showed up," I said, gritting my teeth. *How could he suspect me?*

Robards sighed, stopping his pacing and turning to look at me. "Potter, I'm sorry, but I have to take you off this case."

"What? Why? I haven't done anything!" I said angrily. "Sir, you have to let me help her. She trusts me!"

"Are you sure about that, Potter?" he said.

"I ... I have no reason to doubt that she does," I replied. She couldn't possibly think ...

"Regardless, we need someone slightly less ... attached ... to take over. Weasley, you know Tonks well enough to have a rapport with her, and you've already been involved in parts of the investigation. I'm assigning you this case until further notice," he snapped. Ron bristled at my side and shot me a look of equal parts sympathy and anger.

"Fine. I'll just be on my merry way," I said bitterly. "But will you please at least tell me what happened to her? I deserve to know that much."

"You can visit her in St. Mungo's if you like, as long as you take Weasley with you. But I'm afraid details of the attack are now considered confidential," Robards said quietly. "I'm sorry, Potter, but that's the final word. You are dismissed."

I stormed out of Robards's office, barely noticing Ron hastening to keep up, and headed to my own office. Slamming the door, I lit a cig and puffed hard on it, as though finishing it more quickly would erase this morning from my memory. I slammed my fist onto the top of my desk once, then twice, groaning with frustration.

"Harry, stop! You'll hurt yourself," Ron said, racing into the office and shutting the door behind him. "Mate, I'm sorry. I don't believe for a second you had anything to do with it, but rules are rules, and I don't have a choice."

"I know, Ron," I grated. "It's not your fault. But how could he ... or Tonks! ... think that I had anything to do with this? I don't even know what happened! Please, just tell me if she's alright."

"She's okay, Harry," Ron answered. "She's in hospital. Pretty beaten up, but in one piece. No lasting injuries, no broken bones. Just a lot of bruises."

I sat down with a resounding thump, exhaling. "Thank Merlin," I breathed, taking another long drag off my cig.

"Shite, Harry, you really care for her, don't you?" Ron asked curiously.

"Yeah, mate. I think I'm starting to, anyway," I answered. My hands shook.

Ron sighed. "Look, I know I'm not supposed to give you any details of what happened, but I know you and I know you would never do this. Not to her. It's not your style." Sitting down on the edge of my desk, he continued. "But you've got to promise me, Harry. You cannot go off running around acting on anything I tell you. No one can know that I told you anything. It could cost me my job, and depending on who's behind this, it could cost Tonks her life. You understand me?"

I nodded. It wouldn't stop me from investigating, but over the years I'd learned a little something about discretion. "I understand, Ron. I won't do anything that would get you in trouble."

"Alright, here's how we understand things to have happened. Keep in mind that all we know is what Tonks was able to tell us, but she's been in and out of consciousness, and we can't take everything she's said at face value." Ron cleared his throat, wiping his hands on his robes. "At some point around five this morning, she appeared in the lobby of St. Mungo's, bleeding and barely conscious. All she was able to tell the mediwitches that got to her was that someone had broken in while she was asleep and beat her. She called out Teddy's name, then yours. And then she collapsed. The doctors were able to stabilize her just fine and determined that she'd been beaten by some foreign object. Whoever did this didn't touch her personally. They alerted Robards immediately, and he contacted me to check on Teddy and bring you in for questioning."

My jaw hurt from clenching it shut, and my fingernails had dug half-moons into my palms. "I'll kill him. I'll kill him, Ron, I swear it," I muttered.

"Harry, you have to understand. She said your name," Ron said softly. "Robards has to act as though she might have been naming her attacker. It certainly couldn't have been Teddy ... he's still in a coma. But until we know who it was, he's got to act as though it's a possibility."

"But it wasn't me, Ron, I swear," I said.

"I know, Harry. I already told you that," he said. "But it would really help me if I could ask you a few questions."

"Are you interrogating me?" I said incredulously.

"Oh, sit down, Harry," Ron said. "No, I'm not 'interrogating' you. But I don't know how to solve this case without all the facts, and right now you're the one holding most of the cards. Now do you want to help me or not?"

I sat down again with a sigh. "Of course. I'm sorry, Ron, it's just ..."

"I know, mate." He ran a hand through his red hair and looked back at me. "The way I see it, I can understand her calling out your name for a variety of reasons. I don't think she was naming her attacker, because she said Teddy's name too. And now that I know you were getting ... close, it seems to me that she was calling out for you, maybe to save her."

I winced. I should have gone after her.

He continued. "But the thing that bothers me is that she said she was asleep when she was attacked. I know you and I both went over her wards after Teddy's attack. Do you know if she did anything to them after the letter was delivered?"

I shifted in my seat. "Actually, I did."

"You did what?"

"I changed her wards," I said, looking Ron straight in the eye. "I changed them so they would only admit a handful of people without setting off the world's greatest Howler."

Ron looked at me, eyes narrowed. "And who were those people?"

"Tonks, Teddy, me, you, and Auror White," I said, ticking the names off on my fingers.

"But ... Harry, none of those people could possibly have been there last night, besides Tonks herself," Ron said perplexedly. I sighed inwardly. Seemed like Ron really did believe me, then.

"Well, certainly I wasn't, and neither was Teddy, and I would be willing to bet that it wasn't you," I said.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Ron snarked.

"You know what I mean," I said, cuffing his leg. "That only leaves Auror White, but he couldn't possibly have anything to do with this. We picked him precisely because he and Tonks have always gotten on with one another, and besides, the man has a wife and six kids running around at home. It would be easy as pie to double-check his whereabouts last night."

"Well, I guess that's the first thing I ought to do, then," Ron said heavily. "Want to come to St. Mungo's and visit Tonks first, though?"

I nodded gratefully. "Yeah. Yeah, thanks."

Chapter 8

Chapter 10 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

After a week or so, Tonks and I settled into a fairly pleasant routine. I would fix breakfast and tea for us in the mornings, and we would take turns fixing dinner. When I could, I would pop home for a spot of lunch, usually bringing home curry or fish and chips from the pub near my office. After dinner, we would go over any news that had come to light. Unfortunately, there usually wasn't any. So, I told her about the Malfoy case. She'd heard about it already (no way to escape hearing about it, given that it was in every newspaper this side of China), but she was as stumped as I was as to how to proceed. And every once in a while, we exchanged a kiss or two. But it never went further than that, except in my head at night when I bit my pillow and tried not to call out her name when I came in my hand.

And then one night in October, things did go farther. Once again, it had been an utterly mundane day at work. No news about the Malfoys. No news about the letter. And Teddy was still exactly the same as the day Tonks found him: unresponsive, unconscious. I'd been assigned other routine cases, none of which took longer than a few days to solve, none of which did anything for me other than waste my time. I came home to find that Tonks had fixed dinner for us. Roast beef, mash, green salad, a nice bottle of Cabernet. A few glasses of wine later and we were making out like schoolchildren against the wall of the kitchen, my tie dangling loosely from my collar, my trousers tented. Her hands were everywhere at once, her hair a sensuous violet, her lips pressed wetly to mine.

"Tonksss," I hissed, feeling her hips grind against my leg. She moaned in response as I flicked a thumb against her nipple. "Upstairs?"

I felt her nod more than I saw it, and a second later we reappeared, falling gracelessly onto my unmade bed. I ripped my shirt off, throwing it aimlessly toward the chair in the corner, not caring that my tie still hung loosely around my neck. Her hands fumbled with my belt, and I took that as permission to peel her shirt up over her head. She fell backwards onto her elbows, looking up at me with a hungry, dazed expression. I finished undoing my belt, licking my lips at the sight of her pert nipples hardening in the cool night air. She watched as I slid my trousers off, gasping when my cock rubbed against her leg as I lay down next to her.

"Harry ..." she breathed between heavy kisses. "Harry ... Harry!" She sat up with a grunt, panting as she started at me wide-eyed. "No ... I can't, it's ... you're ~~Harry~~, and I'm ..." Hurriedly, she reached for her shirt and threw it back on over her head, standing up and nearly tripping.

"Tonks, wait! What are you doing?" I pleaded, frustrated and confused. I tugged my trousers back on, wincing as I caught the skin of my cock in my flies. "Whatever I did, I'm sorry, just please, stay," I begged.

"I'm sorry, Harry, I just ... I can't do this," she called, racing downstairs.

"Please, Tonks, it's not safe! Don't go —" But before I could get down the stairs, I heard her calling out her address, and in a flash of green light, she was gone. I sat down on the stairs, cock throbbing and head swirling. What just happened?

Needless to say, I barely slept that night. Part of me wanted to go after her, drag her back here — not just for her own safety but so she could explain to me what in Merlin's bloody name that had been all about. I had thought our attraction was mutual. Hell, she kissed me first, each and every time, and she had made the first move after dinner the previous night. I was just a willing participant. More than willing, if I were to be honest. I mean, even as a randy teenager (especially as a randy teenager) I had noticed her. And not just for her pink hair or pig noses, but also for her sense of humour, her wit, her compassion, her loyalty, and her wicked, wicked fighting skills. Having her around the past few weeks had been ... nice. Really nice. I had thought it would be hard learning to live with someone else around the house. It'd been years since I lived with Ron, and Ginny ... well, we never did get along, as lovers or as housemates. No one else had ever been invited to stay, not like this. I sighed and tugged listlessly on my cock in the shower, hoping that a quick toss would at least earn me a few hours' rest, but nothing worked. By six in the morning I gave up and padded downstairs for a pot of coffee. Rarely drank the stuff, but when I needed a pick-me-up in the morning, a few mugs of the black brew and a shot of Pepperup Potion usually did the trick.

I was on my third cup when a flash of light from the Floo nearly caused me to spill the hot liquid all down my front. "Tonks!" I called hopefully. "I'm so glad you came back —"

"Sorry, Harry," Ron said, dusting his robes off. "But you'd better get dressed. Now."

"What's wrong?" I said, my face paling.

"It's Tonks. She's been attacked," Ron said grimly, his wand gripped tightly. "Let's go."

Chapter 10

Chapter 11 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

We popped in to see Tonks but she was thankfully asleep. Her face was a mess of cuts and bruises, though, and an egg-sized lump was clearly visible on her left temple. Whoever attacked her had been brutal.

Outside for a quick smoke, I turned to Ron. "The thing I don't understand is how she escaped. She's got no cuts or scrapes or torn fingernails to suggest she fought back, so it doesn't make sense for her to have gotten away from her attacker and have escaped through the Floo."

"Yeah, I thought about that too," he answered thoughtfully. "I'm wondering if maybe the attacker hit her so hard that instead of waking up, she was knocked unconscious, and then when she woke up and realized what had happened, she left then?"

"But is that likely? With injuries like that, to have been unconscious only for such a short time, and then wake up mobile?" I asked.

"Not sure, but we can check with the mediwizards," he said.

We trudged back inside and met with Healer Lovelace, the mediwizard overseeing Tonks. "Healer Lovelace, we were wondering if you would be able to tell us anything you think that could help us understand how Tonks got here," Ron asked.

"All we know is that she Flooed here under her own power, severely beaten and barely conscious. She was able to tell us she was attacked while she was asleep, then she called out the name of her son and a Harry before falling unconscious," Healer Lovelace answered.

"That corroborates what we know, but sir, what we don't understand is what could possibly explain how she got away. Is it possible that the attacker thought she was dead and escaped, only for her to wake up and Floo here?" I pressed.

"It's certainly possible," the man said. "Or perhaps she knew her attacker, and so she wasn't immediately afraid of him. I'm terribly sorry; I'm late for rounds. If you'll excuse me?"

After he walked away, Ron and I exchanged dark glances, knowing instantly what each other was thinking. This information certainly wouldn't make me look better in Robards's eyes.

"Harry, you know I have to tell him," Ron said quietly, his eyes holding mine.

"Yeah," I said, nodding. "I know. You're just doing your job."

Ron exhaled. "Look, if you need anything ... maybe you should take a leave of absence, just for a little while. I know you; you've got tons of vacation days stored up."

"I can't go anywhere. Not unless this whole thing is solved," I spat.

"Not saying you have to take a holiday, Harry, just lay low for a while, stay out of Robards' way. I'm sure he doesn't really think it's you, but you know these sorts of things have to be handled properly unless we want the bastard doing this to walk on a technicality," Ron said.

"No, that we don't," I said mechanically. "Fine. I'll go back with you and get some stuff from my office."

I talked to Robards briefly. I thought he seemed relieved to have me gone for a while, and to be honest, I was too. I could do better work if I wasn't under constant supervision. Grabbing a small box, I hastily threw papers and files into it – anything that I thought was related to Tonks's case, Teddy, or the Malfoys. Everything else could bloody well wait. Shrinking it down and putting it in the pocket of my robes, I stopped quickly by Ron's office to tell him I was on official leave. He nodded, lips tightening, and promised to keep me informed. Thank Merlin for small favors.

Once home, though, I sank onto the couch, mind whirling. There was too much information in my head, and none of it pointing me in the right direction. But I swore to myself that leave or no leave, I wouldn't rest until I knew what was going on.

Three days passed by, three days of constant cigarettes and little bathing, of eating cold leftovers from dinners past and half a bottle of Firewhisky, and of absolutely no new ideas. Tonks wasn't awake enough yet to talk, and frankly, I wasn't sure how she would react to me being there. The box from my office sat untouched in the pocket of the robes that I hadn't bothered to hang up. And so, I sat and kindled a fire in the evenings only to watch it burn to ashes, and then I would start it all over again.

But on the fourth morning, I woke up a little more clear-headed. Stretching and yawning, I rubbed my eyes blearily and wondered when I'd last showered – a real shower and not a quick Cleansing Charm – or even brushed my teeth. I trudged upstairs and tried to relax under the warm stream of water, then donned fresh clothes. The downstairs was a mess. Not for the first time, I thanked Molly Weasley silently for her knowledge of household charms and set the place to rights with a few muttered words. Today was Halloween, and it was time to get back to work.

I unearthed the tiny box of papers from my office and took it to my desk. Wand at the ready, I sent papers flying. In one corner went all the files from the Malfoy case, in another everything related to Teddy, and in the center all the information I had on Tonks. Fixing myself a pot of strong tea, I took it and some reheated sausages back to the library, resolving to read everything over yet again. Maybe there was some small detail I had missed. Unlikely, given that I practically had everything memorized, but worth a shot.

Morning turned into afternoon, and afternoon turned into night, and I had taken breaks only to grab another greasy carton of Chinese takeaway and for a quick piss or three. Still, nothing was coming to mind. Nothing seemed new, nothing was showing any promise. Frustrated, I kicked the box that I had brought with me from the office and jumped out of my skin when it rattled.

That's funny, I thought to myself. I thought all I had grabbed were my papers ... I bent down and righted the box, startled to see a Muggle pen fall out. Must have been one of those pens Ron and I were using when we were in France investigating Draco's death. I grabbed it to throw it up onto my desk, but with a sickening swirl, I was yanked into myself.

Chapter 11

Chapter 12 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

I landed on cold, wet grass under a cloudy and starless sky. My heart raced, and I was almost sick, coughing raggedly into the ground beneath my head as I struggled to my knees. I hated Portkeys. Always had ever since the Triwizard Tournament. My hand brushed against rough-hewn stone, and I grasped it, trying to right myself. I shook my head, begging my eyes to hurry up and adjust to the darkness around me. I smelled earth, felt the cold mist, but sensed no one around. Slowly my eyes became accustomed to the lack of light, and I stood with my back to the stone, trying to figure out where I was.

"What the bloody hell is going on?" I muttered to myself sotto voce. Thank Merlin I had kept my wand tucked into my trousers. Standing still, I listened carefully. After five minutes had gone by without a single sound, I whispered *Lumos* and shone the soft light around me. I was surrounded by large, ancient boulders, some standing upright, others long since toppled over. Someone had Portkeyed me directly into the center of Stonehenge.

"Fuck me sideways," I whispered, noticing something ahead. Was it a person, or another boulder? I inched forward, nervous not to have the cold comfort of the stone guarding my back. As I approached, I realized it was, in fact, a person, but a very still, silent one. One leg was bent at an awkward angle, and its hands were bound above its head, which lolled backward in a parody of sleep. Whoever this one was, he or she wasn't with us any longer.

I shone the light around me, checking for attackers, and only when I was convinced I was alone with the body did I shine my wand down toward it. A silver knife protruded from the man's chest, a still-warm trickle of blood pooling around it. I moved the wand closer to the man's face.

"Shite. Shite, shite, bloody shite, shite on a cracker," I said over and over again, my voice growing recklessly louder. It was Remus Lupin, and he was lying dead at my feet. I couldn't help myself. I've seen plenty of bodies, including too many of my loved ones, but ... I turned and vomited loudly into the grass, retching until I thought I might have tasted the soles of my shoes. Wiping my face on my sleeve, I turned back.

"I'm sorry, Remus. I've got to go for help, I need to alert the ... the authorities," I said lamely to his body, aware that there wasn't anything I could do to help. Turning away, I raised my wand to send a Patronus to Ron. But before I could, I heard three distinct pops from outside the ring of stones. I raised my wand and backed up against the slab that held Remus's body. I may not have been able to protect him, but I would be damned if I would let anyone do anything else to him. My knees hit the back of the slab, and I stumbled, my other hand flying backward to steady myself. It hit the knife, cocking it to one side, and I ended up with one hand pressed to Remus's motionless chest.

"Who's there?" I rasped.

"Harry?" I heard Ron's voice calling as if from a hundred kilometres away.

"Ron! Ron, in here!" I called back.

Ron walked into the center of the circle of stones, wand raised. He was followed by Robards and White. "Harry, what's going on ... oh, Merlin, Harry, is that Remus?" he gasped.

"Ron, you've got to believe me," I said. "Someone planted a Portkey in my office, and when I touched it, I ended up here. I found him here ... he's dead. There was nothing I could do," I finished, feeling more pitiful than I had in years.

"You found him like this?" Ron asked, motioning to Remus's body. "He was bound and ... stabbed?"

"Yeah, just like this," I hastened to explain. "I landed over there, by that stone." I gestured with my wand, noticing that Robards and White gripped their own wands more tightly when I did so. "I waited for a few minutes, trying to see in the dark, trying to listen for anyone around me, but there wasn't any. When I lit my wand, I saw him. He was tied up and the knife was in his chest. He was already dead."

"White, check it out," Robards motioned the other Auror over toward the body. "Potter. You say that someone planted a Portkey in your office?"

"They must have done, sir," I said. "I emptied out the box of papers that I brought home from the office today, and I got frustrated, and I kicked it, and out fell this pen, and when I touched it, I wound up here." I knew I was babbling, but I just had to get it all out. I had to make sure Ron believed me.

"Robards, he's definitely dead," White called. "There's a silver knife in his chest. From the looks of things, he couldn't have been dead longer than half an hour at most. He's still warm, sir."

"Take him in," Robards said, gesturing at me.

My eyes widened. "Sir ... *sir!* You can't think that I did this. Remus is ... was ... my friend! I told you what happened. Ron! You believe me, don't you?"

I stared at my best friend, trying to find solace in his eyes, but he wouldn't look at me. I might as well have been stabbed with that knife too, for all the pain I was in. But I had no choice. I had to go in. Tears of impotent rage and hurt leaked from the corners of my eyes, but I presented my wrists to White, who magically handcuffed me.

"Ron, please ..." I whispered. Silently, Ron took one arm, White the other, and a minute later, we were in Robards' office.

Robards himself joined us twenty minutes later, having escorted Remus's corpse to St. Mungo's Morgue. Ron and White hadn't left my side, but try as I might, I couldn't get Ron to look at me. I kicked my heels annoyingly in an aimless pattern against the leg of my chair, wiggling my fingers to keep some feeling in them.

"Alright, Potter, you've got some serious explaining to do," Robards said in a tone of voice I'd only heard him use on hardened criminals.

"I have nothing to explain. I've already told you exactly what happened," I said, looking him straight in the eye.

"No, you've told me your version of how things happened, and I must admit, Potter, there are gaping holes in your story," he snapped. "You can't honestly expect me to believe that days ago, someone mysterious snuck into the middle of the Auror Department, planted a Portkey in your office that you only just discovered tonight, and whisked you off to Stonehenge, alerting us just in time to find you standing over the still warm corpse of Remus Lupin, the ex-husband of your current ... flame ... and the father of your poisoned godson, a knife with your fingerprints on it buried to the hilt in his chest?"

My mouth dropped. Merlin's bollocks on a cracker, it sounded ludicrous, but the sad thing was it was the truth. "I ... yes, sir, I do expect you to believe that because that's exactly what happened." Some secret part of me was very proud that my voice didn't shake when I answered him.

Robards gaped at me. "You've got some bollocks on you, Potter," he sneered. "We've searched your house. We found the pen you claim is a Portkey, but again, it only has your fingerprints on it. Harcourt touched it, and yet he's standing outside this door, not in the middle of bloody Stonehenge."

"But that would make sense," I interjected. "Portkeys stop working after one use, so of course he's here and not there."

"That doesn't explain how your fingerprints ended up on the knife in Lupin's chest, does it?" Robards thundered down at me.

"When I heard you three Apparate in, I couldn't see you. I backed up against the slab, but I lost my balance, and when I reached back to steady myself, I grabbed the knife by accident. It's coincidence!" I rebutted.

"Coincidence, just like your fingerprints are the only other ones on the letter Tonks got under her door?" Robards countered.

"Yes. Exactly like that!" I said, steaming.

"Then how do you explain this letter?" Robards said, shoving a piece of parchment across his desk at me.

Chapter 12

Chapter 13 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Hunching forward, I read: "Auror Robards: I'm afraid for my life. Potter's been threatening me to stay away from Teddy. He said if I came near my son, he would kill me. Please help me. Remus Lupin"

"That's ... that's ridiculous," I spluttered. "I've never threatened Remus a day in my life. I didn't even know he'd been to see Teddy!"

"How did you know he'd gone to see Teddy?" Robards quickly asked.

"I didn't! I just said that!" I groaned. "If he had, I would have been thrilled. I may not spend much time with him anymore, but I know he loves his son."

"Potter, Remus went to see Teddy today, just hours before you supposedly found him dead," Robards stated.

"And you think I killed him because of it?" I asked incredulously.

"Did you?"

"Absolutely not!" I seethed. "And that doesn't explain how you found me at Stonehenge anyway."

"Any Auror that's under suspicion of anything criminal has a tracking spell put on them the minute they leave this building," Robards growled. "If they leave their home, we know about it, and if they go more than a few kilometres in any direction, or show up in any suspicious locations, we follow them. Pure luck on our part that you didn't remember that, eh, Potter?"

"Sod off, Robards!" I spat. "I didn't kill him. I didn't attack Tonks, I didn't poison Teddy. They're my family, you bloody bastard! I've got no reason to hurt any of them!"

"That's enough, Harry," I heard Ron say, his hand on my shoulder.

But Robards stepped in front of me swiftly. "Oh, yes, you do, don't you, Harry?"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"You've got the greatest motive of all: greed," Robards stated softly.

"Greed? Greed for what?"

"Come on, Potter, don't play dumb with me. You know and I know that if Tonks and Teddy Lupin were to die, you'd be the sole inheritor of the Black family fortune," Robards whispered.

Ron's head jerked up, and he stared at Robards through narrowed eyes.

I was dumbstruck. I had no idea what the man was on about. "What family fortune?" I asked.

He laughed, a soft, cold laugh with no humour in it whatsoever. "Come off it, Potter. Teddy's currently the only one that can inherit the fortune, as the last surviving member of the house of Black through his grandmother, Andromeda. Draco Malfoy's son, Scorpius, would have been first in line, but once the rest of that branch of the family passes away, Teddy would inherit everything. But if there's no Teddy, and no Tonks, and no Remus, then you, as Teddy's godfather and Sirius's godson, are the last tenuous link to that fortune."

I had absolutely nothing to say. My mind whirled frantically, trying to digest this information. My mouth worked, opening and closing without a sound.

Robards laughed again. "Got you in one, Potter." Standing up, he turned to Ron and White. "Lock him up, lads. Lock him up." And without another glance, he turned and walked out of the room, whistling tunelessly.

I walked blankly between Ron and White down to the holding cells, where I was shut in with a thin blanket and a jug of water.

White began to walk away. "Coming, Weasley?" he called.

"Yeah, gimme a mo', will you?" Ron responded. He turned and looked down at me, a woeful look on his face.

"Oh, Ron, please, don't believe him," I pleaded, grasping the bars of my cell in an effort to be closer to him, trying to make him look at me.

"Is anyone watching?" Ron mumbled, still staring down toward my chin, not looking me in the eye.

"No, why?" I asked, puzzled.

Then he smiled, a quick flash of brilliant whiteness, before reclaiming his serious look. "Harry, trust me on this one, alright? I do believe you, but I can't let Robards know that, or he won't let me work this case. He knows we've been best mates for ages, so unless he thinks I'm on his side, I might not get to know everything. Just trust me," he said quickly.

I exhaled, almost falling to my knees in relief. "Thank Merlin, Ron. Do you have any idea what he's going on about? What Black family fortune?"

"Harry, the Malfoys may have used up a shite ton of their own wealth, but there's still a lot of Black family money sitting around at Gringotts that not even they could access after the war. It's watched, and not just anyone can access it. Bill told me about it once when we were talking about Draco's potions business," Ron said. "And it's true; that money would have gone to Scorpius, or to his heirs if he had any, but with them gone, it would go to Teddy once Narcissa Malfoy dies."

"But Tonks never mentioned any of this to me. I had no idea. And besides, what do I want with more money? I've got Sirius's, I've got what my parents left me, plus I have a job."

"I know, Harry, and that's what doesn't make sense. I know you would do a lot of stupid shite, but never something like this, and especially not for money," Ron jibed.

I cracked a swift smile in his direction. "What can I do to help? Anything?"

"I dunno right now, mate, but I promise you, I'm going to keep on looking," Ron swore. "And so will Hermione; you know she loves a good challenge."

"Thanks, Ron. I owe you," I said in all seriousness. Once Ron left, I settled down on the hard metal cot and wished with all my might that I had thought to ask him to bring me some cigs.

Chapter 13

Chapter 14 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

Two days went by. Two long, lonely days filled with nothing but idle chatter from the guards around me and the occasional satisfying piss. No Ron, no news, no nothing. But on the third day, a familiar face came walking down the corridor toward me.

"Hermione!" I said, grateful to have anyone besides myself to talk to.

"Shh," she said, passing me a packet of cigarettes through the bars. "I don't know if you're allowed to have these, but I figured you could use them." She smiled wanly. "How are you holding up?"

"About as well as can be expected," I said, fingering the cigs longingly. "I'm so glad to see you. Is there any word?"

"Well, I'm sure that no one's bothered to tell you that Tonks has been awake for a few days now. She seems to be doing just fine," Hermione said with a smile.

"Oh, thank Merlin! That's wonderful news," I said. "Does she remember what happened? Who attacked her?"

"That's the disturbing thing, Harry," she said with a worried look on her face. "She says she must have been dreaming about Teddy or something, because she swears that when she realized what was happening, she looked around and saw him. But she thinks that her brain is a bit addled from the beating, or that the concussion has confused her dreams with what really happened."

"Must have done," I mused. "Because Teddy's still comatose, yeah?"

"Yes, although the mediwizards think they may have figured out what poison it was, or at least, the general type of poison," she continued. "Apparently it's a very lethal version of some new experimental drug for treating amnesia or something like that. It's a really new and not widely known drug, so they had no idea how to test for it, let alone to even look for it in the first place."

"So, can they fix it? Can they cure him?"

"They're working on it, but the problem with dealing with new things like this is that no one knows anything about them, and administering the wrong course of treatments could be fatal. He's not in any danger as he is, so they're taking it slowly so as not to do any more damage," she said.

"Oh, I see," I said a bit dejectedly. Still, it was a step in the right direction, hopefully. "Do you believe me, Hermione?" I asked quietly.

"Of course I do, Harry," she said, staring directly into my eyes, never blinking. "I know you'd never hurt Remus, or Tonks, or Teddy, and there is just no way that any family fortune, no matter how big it is, would ever cause you to act like that."

"Thank you, Hermione," I said simply and sincerely.

"Besides, Ron and I were sitting with Tonks the other day." She paused, biting her lip and looking at me. "She was very confused for a while, Harry, and I think Robards may have been in to talk with her, to question her at some point. Anyway, I definitely got the feeling that maybe she was starting to doubt you."

I opened my mouth to say something, but she waved her hand at me. "Hold on, Harry, hold on, let me finish. I said starting to doubt you, not that she definitely did. But when she started talking with us about this whole idea of the family fortune motive, we ... well, she and Ron ... realized something. Harry, even if the Malfoys were dead, which they are, and Remus, Tonks, and Teddy were also dead, you still wouldn't be the next in line for the Black fortune," she said.

"What?" I asked, perplexed. "But I'm Teddy's godfather, and Sirius's godson. Robards said that—"

"Oh, pish-tosh. Robards doesn't know what we know," she said dismissively. "Ron and Tonks were talking about the Black family tree, and Ron reminded us that technically, the Weasleys are related through both Arthur and Molly to the Blacks ... and they're related by blood, Harry. Their lineage trumps your status. Any one of the Weasleys would be able to press their claim to the money."

"But ... but that eliminates my motive completely," I said excitedly.

"You're bloody right it does," Hermione said firmly.

"And Tonks ... she believes me now?"

"I don't think she ever really truly doubted you, Harry, but this has been an extremely stressful time, and I think ... I think she was more confused over her feelings for you than any sort of belief that you'd suddenly turned into a baddie," Hermione said.

I smiled, a secret, safe little smile. But something else was bothering me. "Hermione, go back a second. So, obviously the fact that the Weasleys would inherit over me eliminates my supposed motive," I said.

"Right," she replied. "But ... ?"

"But then, who would want to set me up? Who could possibly gain from making Robards think that that was my motive? I mean, it's not like any of the Weasleys would do that to me, even if they wanted the Black fortune themselves."

Her brow furrowed. "You're right, Harry. Clearly, someone out there believes that you're the only candidate left ... but who?"

The guards began stirring, motioning to her that her time was up. "Look, Harry, I'll go to Ron and Tonks with this. Maybe they'll think of something again. Someone will be back to see you soon, I promise!" she said, hurriedly moving toward the hallway. "Take care of yourself, Harry! We love you!"

It was times like these that I wished I hadn't destroyed the Black family tree tapestry, but I never could have imagined it proving useful in my defense. So I had nothing to do for another few days except ponder who could possibly gain from framing me.

Chapter 14

Chapter 15 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

November 9, 2007 was my liberation day.

I woke up in the same cramped, aching position I had slept in since being locked here in this cell and wished not for the first time that they would just hurry up and try me, because bloody hell, even Azkaban would be more comfortable.

Stretching, I relaxed and tried to work out the kinks in my neck while I took a piss, no longer perturbed about the idea of the one creepy guard watching. Let him watch, I yawned to myself. Isn't bothering me any. But I had barely pulled up my trousers before I heard a herd of shoes stomping down the hallway, a dozen voices or more babbling in tandem.

I stiffened. *This must be it, then; they're coming to take me to trial*, I thought. Hastily, I ran my fingers through my dirty hair and wiped the lenses of my glasses clean on the tail of my shirt. Very well, so be it. I stood, ramrod straight, and faced my fate.

But instead of a bevy of Aurors coming to take me away at wandpoint, I saw Ron walking with Auror Robards and a handful of others. In the back, I saw a flash of bright pink hair. My heart skipped a beat or four.

"Well, Auror Potter," Robards said gruffly as he opened the gate. "I'm ... pleased to say that you've been exonerated of all charges. You're free to go." He stepped to one side, expecting me to walk out. But instead, I stared at him, my jaw gaping slightly.

"Excuse me?" I mumbled.

"You're, ah, free to go, Potter," he said again. "With my apologies for your time incarcerated. You are restored to your position as an Auror, and you will be compensated for your time."

"That's it? That's all I get?" I said. A cold fury built up inside of me. "That's not good enough, sir."

"What more do you want?" Robards asked softly. "Potter, believe me, I am sorry that you have been unjustly accused and imprisoned, but as an Auror, even you have to understand that all the evidence pointed to you. The minute we knew otherwise, we acted on it, and it is my pleasure to inform you that the perpetrator has been brought to justice. I am not sorry, however, for doing my job, however difficult it was to believe that you might be guilty of these heinous crimes. And believe you me, it was extremely difficult to think such a thing of you. But I did my job to the best of my abilities, and you know it." He spoke with conviction, his voice unwavering.

The anger inside of me evaporated. I knew he was right. I wouldn't have believed it of him, either, but if the evidence had pointed at him, I knew I would have acted the same way. "Apology accepted," I said and extended my hand. Surprised, he took it and then swiftly walked away.

"Ron," I said, catching his eye. "Hermione, thank you so much. I'm sure you two are responsible for this."

"And me," Tonks said, walking up. My heart skipped a beat for the second time today, but for totally different reasons. She looked beautiful, dressed in her official Auror robes, with only a few scrapes and bruises still visible on her face.

"And you," I whispered.

"Wotcher, Harry," she whispered back, then winked. With a smile, she stepped aside, saying, "I think someone else wants to say hello, too."

"Hi, Uncle Harry!" a small voice piped from behind her robes. Teddy peeked out, his bright pink hair gleaming in the harsh light of the hallway.

Tears came to my eyes as I knelt down. "Hiya, Teddy," I said, opening my arms. "How about a hug for your favorite godfather?"

"Awww, in public?" he griped, but when I grabbed him and tousled his hair, he giggled. It was beautiful.

"Look, can we all go somewhere? I've got a lot of questions," I said, looking up at the three of them.

"And do we have a lot to tell you," Ron said with a smile. "Your place?"

Chapter 15

Chapter 16 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

A minute later found us all tumbling out of my Floo. Ten minutes later found me showered, dressed in clean clothes, and sitting down on my couch in front of a huge plate of sandwiches, cold chicken, and Butterbeer. I laughed when Teddy took his first sip and choked, spraying it across Ron's arm.

"Alright, the three of you. Start from the beginning," I commanded, shoveling a ham and cheese into my mouth.

"Well, I think the first thing to say is that thank goodness Ron and Hermione came to visit me in hospital," Tonks said. "It took all three of us to figure this one out."

"Go on," I mumbled around a mouthful of chicken.

"Swallow first, Harry," Hermione laughed. "The first clue was when Ron and Tonks figured out that the Weasleys, not you, would inherit the money. So, that alone would probably have been enough to clear you if only for insufficient motive."

My mouth was full again, so I just nodded for her to continue.

"But when I came to visit you, you pointed out that someone out there didn't know that. Whoever was doing this didn't know about, or didn't remember, the Weasley connection to the Black family," she went on.

"Right," Ron interjected. "Hermione told me about that, so the three of us started brainstorming, going on the assumption that the fortune was the real goal. Between me and Tonks, we had a pretty good idea about the Black family tree, so we started looking for others that could stand to inherit."

"And what we found out was really quite interesting," Tonks continued. "Basically, the family fortune passes down by bloodlines first. Blood trumps all other claims to inheritances. But when other types of relationships are taken into consideration, then the legality of inheritances gets ... fuzzy."

"So, I started doing some research," Hermione said. "And the two main types of relationships that can interfere with inheritances are marriage, of course, and official godfather or godmother status. Problems usually arise when someone related to a family by marriage challenges someone related to a family by god-status, but Harry, as both Sirius's godson and Teddy's godfather, you have double the ties to the family, and your claim would technically win out over someone who was just related through marriage."

"You're saying," I said, swallowing hastily, "that someone out there who's only related to the Blacks by marriage thought that by eliminating me, he or she would then be the only inheritor?"

"Exactly," Ron said. "You know who it is yet?"

"Not a clue, mate. I'm baffled," I said. "Keep going while I keep eating."

"Well, Tonks came to the conclusion that if whoever it was discounted the Weasley relationship to the Blacks, they probably were a pureblood, someone who would perhaps never have known that the Weasleys were related because we're blood traitors," Ron said matter-of-factly. "So, we were looking for a pureblood who was related to the Blacks by marriage ..." He waited expectantly.

"Don't make me guess, Ron," I growled, grabbing another sandwich. "I'm exhausted and famished and utterly delighted to be home and if you would just tell the bloody story — oops, sorry, Teddy — then I'd be a happy, happy man."

"Fine," Ron sighed teasingly. "But I thought Auror Potter would have gotten it by now."

Hermione elbowed him in the ribs. "Don't take the mickey out of him, Ron. He's been through enough," she said. "Harry, at Draco's funeral, didn't you and Ron notice something odd?"

"Yeah, well, Ron did, anyway; Narcissa Malfoy wasn't there," I said, popping open another Butterbeer. "Thought Lucius had said she was practically an invalid because of the stress of the loss."

"Right," Hermione continued. "But the problem is, Harry, she's not been seen since and it's been months."

"So what? I know how much she loved Draco, and if she loved Scorpius half as much, she had every right to be devastated," I said.

"Sure, Harry, that's true," Tonks said. "But we were looking into anyone that could possibly inherit the money, and in particular, anyone that would consider you a threat."

"And you thought it could be Lucius?" I asked, mulling it over. "Well, he's a pureblood, and he's related to the Blacks through his marriage to Narcissa, but that still doesn't make sense because wouldn't Narcissa inherit the money? What would Lucius have to do with it?"

"You're right, Harry. Narcissa would inherit the money ... as long as she were alive," Ron said.

"But she's not been seen in months," I said, my brain whirling. "So, what you're trying to tell me is that she's dead?"

"Not exactly," Tonks said grimly. "We began investigating him the next day, though."

"Harcourt and I went to the Manor under the pretense of alerting Lucius to some new information from France," Ron said. "We asked to be able to extend our condolences once again to Narcissa in person, but he wouldn't let us, saying that she was too weak to accept visitors. But he did allow us to speak with the house-elves."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, you see, the 'evidence' we had pointed to a rogue house-elf at their French manor," he continued.

"A rogue house-elf?" My voice dripped with cynicism.

"Hey, at least he bought it," Hermione said. "Go on, Ron."

"So, we were talking to their house-elves, and of course, they were being very secretive, afraid of retribution," Ron said. "But the one, she kept telling us she had to go, that it was 'time for Mistress's special tea.' So, I asked her about it, saying how much Hermione here loved tea, and would she give us the recipe for it. House-elves everywhere know Hermione, and fortunately this one apparently just loves the famous Miss 'Mione Granger, so she was more than happy to provide us with a sample of the secret ingredient," Ron concluded.

"What was it?" I asked, wiping my mouth and stifling a belch. Blimey, but I could have eaten another tray of sandwiches. Maybe some pudding ...

"It was a watered-down version of the same thing the mediwizards had found in Teddy's system," Tonks said, looking protectively over at her son, who was playing pretend Quidditch in the next room. "It was basically keeping Narcissa in a comatose state, just like Teddy's, only it was pretty much keeping her alive."

"You mean, Lucius poisoned his own wife?"

"We're not sure, actually. It could be that she really did fall ill, or had some sort of accident. The point is that it was keeping her just enough alive that she could still legally inherit the fortune through blood lineage if all the other candidates had been eliminated," Ron said.

"But ... that makes no sense," I said. "If you're telling me he was keeping Narcissa alive but comatose with poison so that she could be the one to inherit the money, then you're telling me he is also the same one who was after the rest of us. But that doesn't explain why he killed his own family!"

"Sure it does," Hermione said. "You see, after the war, part of the condition of his and Narcissa's freedom was that they rescind all rights to inheriting any of the Black money unless Narcissa was the sole remaining heir."

"You mean to tell me that Lucius Malfoy ... killed his own son and grandson, and Remus, and attacked the rest of us, simply so that Narcissa could claim the fortune?"

Chapter 16

Chapter 17 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

I was astounded. "And then what? Was he planning to kill her?"

"Yep," Ron said. "If Narcissa had already inherited the money as the last heir, and then she died, then all her estate would pass to him as her husband. When he was questioned, Lucius slipped up and basically said that Draco was a disappointment; he'd gone soft, wasn't upholding proper pureblood traditions. Technically he's still virile. He could have found a new wife or mistress and gotten a new heir to pass the estate onto after he died."

"This is insane," I breathed, running my fingers through my hair. "This means ... this means that Lucius is the one that poisoned Teddy, that attacked Cecily and Tonks? That killed Remus? And tried to frame me?"

"Yes, Harry, he's behind it all," Tonks said.

"But how?" I asked.

"Well, first things first," Ron said. "The first thing that happened was that Teddy was poisoned and Cecily's memory was altered. The way I figure it, Lucius actually did show up that day, and his breaking in to Tonks's house set off her wards. But no one knew because Cecily's memory was stolen and Teddy was unconscious. So, we don't actually know how the poison was administered, but we think that maybe Cecily was put under an Imperio and gave Teddy his lunch without him realizing anything was different. Then Cecily could have gone about her day as normal, but under Lucius' control, and when she went to Floo back to the Leaky, he performed a Memory Charm on her that would erase her knowledge of her actions and of him ever having been there."

"That makes sense," I admitted. "That explains the wards being breached when I checked them, and it also explains how Teddy was poisoned and what happened to Cecily. But what about the letter? The wards didn't go off then."

"I think Lucius got smart after the first go-round at my house," Tonks explained. "He remembered the wards having been set off, but he took a gamble and figured that they were probably geared to allow blood relatives access. So he either Polyjuiced into Narcissa long enough to slip the letter under my door, or ... he animated her body somehow and brought her there to do it. With a potions lab in his house, my bet's on Polyjuice, since I'm not sure my wards would know the difference."

"Hmm," I mused. "One smart, sick bastard, that one. So, that means that when he came to attack Tonks, he was wearing another Narcissa suit?"

"Actually, I think it was worse than that," Tonks said, paling. "I ... I thought I was dreaming about Teddy, I thought my injuries maybe confused me about what had happened, but while I was unconscious, I kept thinking ... thinking about Teddy attacking me. In my dream, I thought he was climbing up into bed to sleep with me, the way he does after a nightmare or something. But then the pain started and I couldn't quite seem to wake up. Now, I think maybe I was awake the whole time and that Lucius had Polyjuiced into my son."

I gagged. The thought of that man looking like the innocent boy in the next room, making Tonks think her own son was trying to kill her, filled me with rage. My Butterbeer bottle exploded everywhere.

Hermione quickly *Evanescod* the mess. "Harry, we're not entirely sure that that's what happened, but it seems likely. It explains why Tonks was calling for Teddy at St. Mungo's, why she didn't fight back at first. And ... when they took Lucius in, they found Tonks's blood all over Lucius's cane. That must have been what he beat her with."

"Fine," I said tersely, trying to control myself. "So, he went after Teddy and, thinking that Teddy would likely die like Narcissa was going to, he tried to take out Tonks. I assume he killed Remus because if Teddy didn't die, then Remus could legally assume guardianship of Teddy's inheritance?"

"Exactly," Ron said. "We think he took Remus to Stonehenge because it was Halloween and because it was a waning moon. Lucius still buys into a lot of superstition, and he probably thought that the combination of place and time would make Remus's werewolf side weaker. It's the same reason he used a silver knife. Silver doesn't actually affect werewolves; it's just an old wives' tale, but Lucius probably thought that it couldn't hurt. We don't know how he got Remus there, but it's possible he used a Portkey, like he did with you."

"I wonder how he even got the Portkey into my office to begin with," I mused.

"Well, you'd been keeping a fairly regular routine, for once," Tonks said. "Because of me living here, I mean. So, it's possible that he just popped in while you were out at lunch, or snuck in at night."

"But how would he have known when I'd touch it?" That was something that was sticking in the back of my mind. "I could have picked it up anytime, and it would have done him no good."

Tonks and Ron looked stumped at that one. Hermione said slowly, "This is just an idea, mind you, but we have no way of knowing that it really was Remus who visited Teddy at the hospital that day. Clearly, Lucius wrote both of the letters with the same Quick Quotes quill; that much seems obvious when you look at them side by side. So, it's possible that he had captured Remus days, or weeks, ago and Polyjuiced into him only after the letter had been delivered to Robards. And if Lucius had a tracking spell on the Portkey, or on you, he'd know when you touched it, and he could Apparate Remus there, kill him, and leave you to take the blame."

"That makes perfect sense, Hermione," Tonks said. "I hate to admit it, but Remus has been ... I mean *was* ... such a loner since we split up. He was probably an easy target for Lucius to capture." Her eyes filled with tears. "We had our problems, but he didn't deserve that. He was a good man."

"What a convoluted mess," I said, sighing. Looking at Tonks, I gathered her into my arms and squeezed her consolingly. "You alright, love?"

She looked over at me strangely, then said, "Yeah, actually, I think I am."

"Lucius goes to trial tomorrow, Harry," Hermione said softly. "Do you want to attend?"

"You bet your arse I do," I said and hugged Tonks to me again.

Epilogue

Chapter 18 of 18

Harry is asked to investigate a series of suspicious attacks, but soon the suspicion is turned toward Harry himself. Can he clear his name?

January 2, 2008

I took a drag of my cigarette and walked away, flicking the butt aimlessly toward the wet bushes. My girl was waiting for me up ahead, and I wasn't going to keep her waiting. Not anymore.

Teddy was there too, his hair black and shaggy in an innocent imitation of mine. I loved my godson fiercely. Maybe one day he'd be my stepson, too. But there was time enough for that. Right now, it was just enough to be with them both, whatever we were.

Sometimes, it takes a lot to open your eyes, you know? You go through so much in life, but it's so easy to go through it all blindly. But if you're lucky, one day you realize that what you want, what you need, has always been right in front of you, ready for you to realize it.

I'm the luckiest man alive.