

One Night in Azkaban

by *Doomspark*

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The tiny boat bobbed on the moonlit water, and Argus pulled harder on the oars. His hands, roughened by years of hard work, were well-suited to this labor. The muscles of his shoulders rippled, whipcord over steel, with each stroke. Soon enough he'd be near his goal.

Almost as if he'd summoned the thought, the boat grated on the rocks of the shore. He stepped out and hauled the small craft above the water-line. If his plans went south, he wanted a way out. He'd no intention of being here come morning. If all went well, he'd still need the boat.

Azkaban loomed ahead. The Dementors held no terrors for him; he had no happy thoughts. How could a Squib be happy, constantly exposed to foolish children – children that didn't value their magic? There was a time when he would've killed to be able to use magic. Morosely, he plodded up to the main gates, clutching the master key as though it were a talisman. At this time of night, only the Dementors were there to see him.

They wouldn't stop him. It almost made him laugh – being a miserable wretch made him the perfect man for this job. He shuffled down the corridors of the cell-blocks, peering into each tiny room. Malfoy was sitting on his bunk, his head in his hands. His blond hair was matted and filthy. Argus snorted softly and moved on.

Level by level, he traversed the prison. On the third level, he entered a particular cell and carefully scraped some of the dust from the floor. Two rows over, he entered another cell and gathered up the bones lying there. Down one more level, and into a third cell where there was the quick flash of a knife. Two vials of blood were placed in a carefully padded box and joined the other contents of his pockets. In the next cell, there was another flash of bloodied steel. He bent and picked up the severed hand, wrapping it in a clean cloth to avoid contaminating the other odd things he'd collected or brought with him.

That was the final thing he needed. He let himself into an unoccupied cell and set to work. He'd memorized the recipe and instructions months ago, back when he'd been cleaning out Snape's rooms and found a dog-eared copy of *Double, Double* wedged behind other more innocuous books. He knew about that book; any wizard over the age of fifty knew the name of Grindelwald.

Snape had said once that Grindelwald was also a Potions Master. He had specialized in Healing Potions for a while, and then moved on to darker things. This book was a compilation of the nastiest and darkest potions Grindelwald had ever devised. There were only three copies known to be in existence – and those were all under Ministry control. Snape, somehow, had acquired a fourth.

Argus hadn't meant to actually read the book, but he'd wondered just how creative Grindelwald had been. So he'd thumbed through the yellowing pages, skimming here and there, until a word near the back had caught his eye: De-Squibification.

Curious, he'd begun reading. The potion itself was simple, and required no magic on the part of the brewer – just the will and determination to create it. The ingredients were the tricky part – bones and blood and living flesh from 'donors', dust from a prison cell, and other such things.

He poured the vials of blood into the bowl, and added the prescribed pinch of cell-dust. Taking up one of the bones, he stirred it slowly six times clockwise, and three times widdershins. Then he let the bone slide into the bowl, and picked up the severed hand. This one ingredient he was not entirely sure about, but he'd thought it too good a chance to pass up. Pettigrew wasn't that powerful a wizard, but a lot of power had gone into the spell that created his artificial hand.

The blood-spattered silver metal glistened in the moonlight as he stirred the potion again, using the hand. Three times clockwise, three times widdershins. As before, he let the hand slide into the potion when he was done. A twisted smile crept over his face as the potion changed color, becoming a blue-grey. It had worked! More confidently now, he added the remaining ingredients and stirred them as required. Finally it was done.

He lifted the bowl and saluted the moon briefly before he brought it to his lips.