

Інформація

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Journey

Книги

>

Гарри Поттер

Волшебное путешествие

Автор:

FictionOnlyReader

Следуйте за Куинном Уэстом в его волшебном путешествии, который попадает в мир Гарри Поттера, но является ли мир, в который он попал, таким же, как тот, о котором он когда-то читал? Сможет ли он найти свой путь в этом новом мире? Сможет ли он когда-нибудь почувствовать себя здесь своим? Какую возможность предоставит ему магия этого мира? Прочтите, чтобы узнать...

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401. Chapter 401: I Did It!

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James Potter looked outside the glass pane, looking at multiple teams of Junior Aurors working at their desk like it was the busiest part of the day. He saw food deliveries come in through the door every few minutes for the people who should've already left for home and passed their duties to the night shift but couldn't because of what had happened today. He could see many who were dressed like they were about to go out for a night of fun but now had to work in the office, and that too in their party wear.

He turned away from the busy and noisy scenery and turned to face a calmer but much heavy sight inside the meeting room.

". . . we have sent all of them back with security posted around their residences," finished Kingsley with a sigh. He stood in front of a near hundred photos posted on a board as he explained the situation and updates to the people in the room.

"We have eighty-five Death Eaters in our custody," Rufus Scrimgeour sighed, looking at the board, which was mostly populated by Death Eater photos. "How many of them do you think can we keep?" he asked.

James pursed his lips. Usually, detaining eight-five Death Eaters would've been a cause of celebration around the country, but right now, it was stressing everyone in the DMLE. The eighty-five Death Eaters weren't caught by them; they were delivered by the Invisible Vigilante, an outlaw for whom the DMLE had issued an arrest mandate. There was no evidence of any wrongdoing against these people. Yes, they had Dark Marks on their arms, and yes, the missing department heads were

returned around the same time— something unquestionably planned out by the Invisible Vigilante— but that was in no way any form of evidence. While the two events were obviously connected, in the eyes of the law, they were two independent events that had happened simultaneously. Even having a Dark Mark wasn't a criminal offense as the Dark Mark could be forced upon anyone against their will.

They could prosecute, but it was not enough to convict.

Robards Gawain, Head Auror, replied, "We haven't been able to question any of them. All of them are in an off-site holding facility being tended by medi-healers as we speak." Having experience with the Invisible Vigilante's victims had taught them that whatever he did to them was taxing— they would be knocked for hours, and even after that, they'd be in bad shape because of the dark magic coursing through their bodies. It took treatment to get them to a talking state. "Even after that, if we can somehow make them confess, we can't simply use that without evidence."

"Evidence. . . what did we get from the scene of crimes?" asked Scrimgeour.

The scenes of crimes were the last place the department heads remembered themselves at. They had sent teams to the sites to get some evidence of the crime, so they could have something concrete and tangible.

"Nothing great. We couldn't even find a single eyewitness on the scenes who could tell us anything. If we're to ignore the Death Eaters and the victims' words, it's like nothing happened at all," Gawain sighed.

Sitting on the table with his feet up, Sirius grumbled, "The man went through all the trouble to get us the Death Eaters; why couldn't he have left some evidence behind? It's like he doesn't care if we don't go home."

"I would prefer if you can keep your jokes to yourself right now, Sirius,"

said Scrimgeour. "We can't detain them; we don't have enough. So this is what we're going to do, keep an eye on the eighty-five people, and the moment they get well-enough to speak, go and question them, get as much information as possible from them. There were those smart enough not to speak, push them, but don't go overboard— we will be calling everyone in as part of a formal interrogation in the abduction case for a thorough grilling— and those who are still difficult, we will again call them in for another round of questioning in the investigation against the Invisible Vigilante. I want to look as aggressive as we can on this case, make every one of those eighty-five bastards feel that they're living under our eye every moment of their day. . . pressure them enough, and they'll make a mistake."

James liked it. He could feel how the people in the meeting room felt the same, and he was sure he would get the same reaction when told outside. The case wasn't looking like a promising one in an orthodox way, but it presented great opportunities. "We can map the entire organization out," he said. "I'm sure a few out of eighty-five will squeak and spill everything out for us. We could know the hierarchy, what they're planning. . . and even the locations of Azkaban escapees like Lestranges and Rookwood," the more he spoke, the more excited he felt. "Maybe we will be able to get some evidence. . . and launch an investigation— cripple the Death Eaters."

It was the chance to go after the most affluent in the Death Eater organization whom they hadn't been able to touch after the mass trials at the end of the first war. And this time, no one was going to buy the Imperius 'bullshit' defense anymore.

"There's a possibility I like very much," said Scrimgeour. He looked to Gawain and spoke, "Form a task force for the case and add this as one of

their agendas."

Gawain nodded.

Sirius looked outside at the Junior Aurors working away, "We're not going home today, are we?"

Scrimgeour stood up and buttoned the front of his suit. "You're not; I, though, am leaving for the night. I wish you a productive night, and I'll see you tomorrow morning sharp, gentlemen," Saying that the Head of DMLE walked out of the meeting room for his home.

Gawain turned to his Captain and Senior Aurors and addressed them, "Let's get working. I want all of this processed before we leave today. And I want an update before lunch. Now—"

"You're also leaving, too?" asked Sirius.

"Yes, Black, I'm leaving."

"I also want to leave."

"Become the Head Auror, and then you're free to leave anytime you wish."

". . . That sounds like a chore. Do you have something quick?"

Gawain shook his head and put on his hat before leaving the room, but before he did, he called James to follow him.

"Yes, sir?" asked James.

"I would like you to be in charge of this task force. This can be a big step for your career, one step closer to your way to Captain. It's safe to assume you're going to take it?"

"Yes, sir, of course. I would love to lead this task force."

"Good, you're free to choose your deputy. Don't forget to take recommendations for the members from the other Seniors and Captains."

Gawain stopped and turned to James, "This is big, James. This can be a big step forward, but if you aren't able to produce expected results, it can

bring a lot of pressure on your head— all eyes will be on this. I'm sure right about now, the papers are editing tomorrow's editions, and the day after that, your name will be up there, plastered on the front page." He patted James' shoulder and wished him good luck before leaving.

When James returned, Sirius asked, "What did he say?"

"He put me in charge of the task force."

"Congratulation, James!"

"You're going to be my deputy."

"No, James!"

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- (Scene Break) -

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Quinn put down his foldable patio chair on a roof of a building in the non-magical part of the city and sat down with all the magical newspapers he could get his hands on. He had already glanced at the front headlines on all, so he knew what the main breaking news was going to be, making him eager to see what had actually happened.

"Oh. . . ah. . . really. . . that's- interesting, okay."

As usual, some of the media houses had really put their spin on the events and had spun some creative narratives— some were interesting, even amusing, but some were quite absurd. One even said that the Invisible Vigilante was a Dark Lord trying to hunt down Voldemort to take his place as the biggest and only Dark Lord in the country.

"At least they found everyone," he read an article listing the magically moving list eighty-five people handed in.

Eighty-five people, Quinn's heart beat a bit as he savored the number. It was a number that he felt pride about. In the months during his Snatcher-hunting, he had only been able to get his hands on Death Eaters less than

half of that number, but now he had made a dent so big that things feel real.

He leaned into his chair, thinking about how different things were now from the cannon timeline. What should've been a country with a Ministry run by political puppets with fear-mongering against Muggleborns who were forced to hide in the dread of being caught and put into harsh camps, and a Dumbledore-less Hogwarts being run by Death Eaters as professors— that world was now had a strong Ministry and the Hogwarts serving as a haven for parents to send their children under the protection of Dumbledore.

'The Death Eaters can be opposed,' thought Quinn as a positive. There was no need for students and civilians to raise their wands against the Dark Lord's forces. Even if Voldemort had a horde of Dementors, tribes of Vampires, an army of Trolls, percussion of Giants, and packs of Werewolves— there was enough defending power to not let things fall into the hands of brave yet ordinary people.

Quinn thought about how things had changed so much, and three points in history stood out to him.

First was something that he had nothing to do with, and that was the Potters not dying on the fateful day the Boy-Who-Lived was 'born'— the Potter family image had been strong, and that had propelled the birth of a stronger political faction that was supposed to be in shambles after so many lives lost in the war— a stronger Light Faction had created a proper three-way balance which originally supposed to be lopsided in favor of the Dark Faction.

The second point in history was when he had whisked away Amelia Bones away from her breached house just before Voldemort could kill her and thus saved the strongest and frankly the only option as the Minister

candidate to take the chair in times against a vicious and ruthless Dark Lord (no offense against Rufus Scrimgeour). He saw Amelia Bones becoming the Minister as a turning point— without her, the core of the defense didn't exist.

The third was when he dropped the Gaunt's Ring into the container of Basilisk Venom vapors. The moment the Horcrux had shrieked and fumed was the moment the fate of the country had been changed. Dumbledore never found the cursed ring; he never put it on and never sealed his fate. And Quinn couldn't think of a reason where a healthy Dumbledore would sacrifice his life before putting Voldemort into the ground.

'I did that,' he declared to himself. He was the reason why things were as they were. 'I. Did. That.' Quinn looked up at the sky— he was continuing to do so until the Snake came out of his nest to face the Phoenix, and when that happened. . . he was going to be there to sign off on his doom. 'I will do it.'

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Quinn West - MC - Till then, let's keep bagging 'em.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Sweet or Savory?

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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402. Chapter 402: Another

Christmas

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a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

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It was December, and the Christmas week was bringing joy to the people in the country. Every shop was decorated with strings of Christmas lights and decoration ornaments, dripping every corner in the joy of the season. Another year was about to end, and the celebration for the new, hopefully, year better had begun in full swing.

Quinn, wrapped in warm layers, walked among the streets of London, gazing at the stores and the people— everything seemed to be dyed in delight. His eyes fell upon a youthful family of three: parents and their young child— the father had his hands occupied with the shopping they had done while the mother bent down to pick up their child, who herself was holding a tiny plastic bag in her hands as if helping her parents in carrying the weight. His eyes followed them as they passed him by, and he winked at the child who followed him with her bright, curious, child-like big eyes.

Seeing the family shopping made him sigh. It wasn't like his family ever shopped together. He couldn't remember all of them had gone shopping together except for maybe a couple times, and that was for novelty goods. But the family's happy vibes made him recall how this time of the year went for him. He would start a month ago and began planning the gifts that he would send his family and friends, and during the days leading to Christmas, he would handcraft the presents for his personal touch on them to show that he cared. Every Christmas morning, his friends would find a gift at their house while he would watch his family's reaction to what he got them.

But it wasn't going to happen this year.

He wasn't going to be at home this time. Just like every year, he had sent

everyone gifts to not let those who didn't know to feel something was wrong, and for those who knew what he was doing, they wouldn't worry. Christmas gifts were one of the very few communication he had with anyone in his life so that no one could find him— and he had gone through various steps to keep himself hidden while sending the gifts.

'Ah. . . I want to meet people,' he sighed.

It was as if the universe itself was reading his thought because as he was staring into a tailer boutique with thee gorgeous suit jackets worn by half-mannequins behind a pane of glass, he heard a startled voice.

"Quinn?!"

His eyes widened a fraction as he urgently turned his head to face the voice and, to his surprise, again came upon a different family of three.

However, this time it was a family of three he knew and they him.

Standing before him were two brunette women with part-curly and part-wavy standing alongside a tall, bespectacled man.

". . . Hermione," he slowly uttered in surprise. His eyes immediately darted around the block to scout if someone was accompanying her, but the alert instinct was quickly sedated when logic dictated that no Auror, even in the Order of Phoenix, knew about his other identity. Quinn went back to looking at the three, and he could see what genetic features had been passed to Hermione by her respective parents.

"What are you doing here?" asked Hermione, and Quinn could see her right arm taut a bit; she was thinking about her wand. It made him sigh inside. . . he felt saying that he only targetted the bad guys wasn't going help here.

"Hello, Hermione. . . Merry Christmas," he said with a smile. Albeit a little surprised, Hermione returned the greeting, sounding normal. He turned to the parents, Mary and Richard, and greeted them the same:

"Merry Christmas, Dr. and Dr. Granger. I hope you two have been well."

"My apologies, but I don't seem to recall meeting you," said Richard, looking confused behind his glasses.

"He's Hermione's friend, dear. From Hogwarts," supplied Mary. "We met him when we visited the Weasley twins' shop. How can you forget him; the ward around our house, Aegis, it's Quinn's family business." She looked to Quinn, "Merry Christmas to you as well, Quinn."

"Oh, yes!" a flash of understanding shone over Richard's face. "I remember you now. You had to leave in a hurry. I would like to thank you for the ward, son. The entire process was straightforward, and the people who came were extremely polite."

"I'm happy that you're satisfied with our services," smiled Quinn. "We did our best to create respectable wards around the house without the magic interfering with the electric appliance in the building. Speaking of magic, Hermione had been off age for a while now; she must've shown you her magic— how did you like it?"

Mary beamed as she responded, "It was out of our expectations! Professor McGonagall had shown us a couple of spells when she visited us with Hermione's letter, and we saw magic here and there during our trips to Diagon Alley— but seeing Hermione perform magic. . . it was extraordinary!" Richards seemed to agree wholeheartedly, while Hermione seemed a mix of pride and embarrassment.

"Mum," she said, stretching the word to express her desire to stop this conversation.

"So what brings you to this part of the city," asked Richards after chuckling at his daughter.

"I . . . was window shopping," said Quinn. He could feel Hermione's curiosity peak on her face when her father posed the question and

narrow in suspicion when he answered. But his answer wasn't a lie. He had been wandering around the city to get some fresh air and take a break. . . and looking at merchandise through the windows while doing that. "What about you three? If I remember correctly, you reside in Hampstead Gardens, that's a distance from the city."

Quinn ignored Hermione's eyes widening.

"There's this bakery down the street which makes just the best Christmas dessert you'll ever have. We take a lot home with us every year," said Mary.

"Oh, maybe I should try it too," smiled Quinn. He would never say no to good food.

It was then that Hermione barged in. She said, "Of course, you should try it," she turned to her parents. "You two go ahead; we'll catch up with you."

The Granger parents left, smiling as they told to hurry along as they were going to have lunch at the bakery. The moment they left, Hermione's smile left her face, and she opened questioned,

"Why are you really here?"

"As I told your parents, I am truly window shopping. Our meeting was a genuine coincidence. If you're worried about me following you and your parents, don't worry about it," he smiled, "I'm the type to visit houses—not much for intercepting people on the street. . . if you know what I mean." His words, while spoken with a pleasant smile, brought caution and fear to Hermione's face. He sighed, "No need to look at me like that. I won't even think about hurting you and your parents. I'm not a maniac, you know; still the bloke you know in Hogwarts."

"I'm sorry, but I can't help but feel fearful of the man who caught and crippled eight-five Death Eaters in a single day. And those words don't

help if you think otherwise."

"By that logic, you should fear Dumbledore much more than me."

"How did you do it?"

"What?"

"Catch so many Death Eaters in a single day."

"It was not a day. . . That day was just the execution. It took weeks of preparation, research, scouting, and sitting down and talking to more people than I have done in years to obtain the information I needed. It was many sleepless nights and days at stretch spent in busy work. In a way, it was no different from preparing for an exam, just with footwork added," shrugged Quinn. There was no point in telling her exactly how he took every step of his plan. Underselling, as he just did, was best for Hermione, who would argue with him if he oversold it, and if he stuck to the cold facts, she would then again ask questions to work out a narrative in her mind. "How has Hogwarts been treating you?" he asked. "It must be exciting to have William Weasley, an actual Curse Break, teach the class. An actual, productive DADA class for a change, I reckon."

"It feels more like a proper call than it even did. The last time I remember feeling like this was Lupin's class. Even Headmaster's classes, as delightful as they were, were not regular classes. Bill has taught us well, and we have learned the same amount in practice as we did in DA. It's now the class that everyone looks forward to."

"It looks he's trying to put more practical usage in your head. . ." He said, and she understood the connotation.

"What if he is; there's nothing wrong with knowing more spells."

"No, there isn't. But it also means that you need to come straight with your parent and tell them what has been happening in the Wizarding world."

". . . What do you mean?"

"They are obviously oblivious to what's been happening, or I'm sure you wouldn't have been spending time with them so jovially," if she had told them, it would've been a Christmas spent with the Potter for Hermione.

"You can't be there for them all the time; they need to be aware so that they can protect themselves."

"How would that help? It would only serve to give them a cause of stress that has nothing to do with them. The Wizarding World is not theirs; it's mine and yours."

"Be that be true, but they're connected to it through you. Do you have a Labyrinth door at your home, at their practices? Because even if the wards can stop them for a while, even if they're able to avail the Hit Wizard protection service— which is unlikely because of the politics of it all— and those things are external. They need to be in charge of their own safety; they should be able to run to Labyrinth doors and disappear somewhere safe away from the chaos they have nothing to do with. . . . A war is coming along, Hermione, you need to tell them about it— you've to tell them now before you leave— before you miss the chance and might end up regretting it."

He had long ago given the same talk to Eddie, Marcus, Luna, Daphne, Tracey— that they should secure their families and even themselves by taking simple steps. He had convinced them to convince their families to strengthen their wards, install Labyrinth doors, and then he had visited their houses and utilized the backdoors in Aegis wards to mark them— for when something wrong happened, he would know and be there.

"Do you think this is fun?" he asked.

". . . What?" Hermione blinked in confusion.

"Away from my family, my friends, those who love me. . . having to put

my life on pause to become someone else entirely. I'm not doing this for fun— it's more painful than anything. I'm not doing this for glory— the mask is there to hide me. I shall be the shield, the dagger, the poison, for them. . ." Quinn shook his head; his thoughts were going to a place he had sworn not to let them swerve to. "I know you don't like me, Hermione. But put that opinion aside and take this advice of mine, for war is almost upon us—" and he had a big part in it being so.

He took out a Panama hat and placed it on his head. "Tell your parents I apologize for not being able to join them for lunch. Wish them New Year's wishes from me, and the same goes for you." He passed her by but had only taken two steps when he heard her say,

"Is. . . Is the war really close?"

Quinn turned and nodded, "I just crippled eighty-five Death Eaters and crushed an important plan that would've been their opening play. The power-hungry maniac won't take this slight sitting; he will do something much bigger, much horrifying— it might be tomorrow, next week, the following month. . . but it is definitely coming. . . . Merry Christmas, Hermoine, and I hope you have a Happy New Year."

Quinn turned away, and with his hands behind his back, he walked away, leaving behind the young man staring and thinking. She hadn't gone through the adversities she was supposed to; she was still mature, but she was very much her own age— and it was because of him.

'In that case, I will protect everyone.'

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Quinn West - MC - I have a dubious moral system at best.

Hermione Granger - The Golden Girl - In another time, she was why any and all of it was possible.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Alright, it's about to go down.

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403. Chapter 403: Plan To Attack

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The Heads of some of the most prestigious families in the country sat around a long table carved from a beautiful white jade marble, polished to reflect their tense faces that were taut in nervousness. None dared to look at the head of the table where their silent leader sat— Voldemort hadn't said a single word since they had gathered in the room, but no one ventured the risk of opening their mouth to say anything about it. Why would they? Everyone in the room knew the reason behind the silent fury.

"We lost eighty-five men," Voldemort finally spoke, his tone not any different from usual. "What was supposed to temporarily cripple twelve important departments so that we could gain control over them turned into a slight against our name—my name— and has cost me eight-five able-bodied men. What was supposed to be one step forward has made us take one step back. How did this happen?" he asked.

"My Lord, we should get our men back from the hands of the Aurors! Storm Azkaban and free our comrades!" said one of the Death Eaters, looking to score points; alas, his attempt was doused in oil and then set

on fire.

"Silence," Voldemort's voice was graver than a cemetery. The Death Eater cowered in his seat, immediately developing a sheen of sweat over his face. Voldemort continued, "I talked"— a shiver passed through the present company— "with all the team leaders and with Rivers to identify who let our plans slip to the Invisible Vigilante. . . but none of them knew about it or could remember interacting with him, which means either someone in my court is the Invisible Vigilante, or they have a way to know our every move. If anyone wants to come forward to say something, now is the moment."

The members sweated. They noticed how the twelve team leaders were not present in the room, and neither was Rivers. Their mind raced to think where were they, how were they. . . if they were alive— the thoughts went through everyone's minds and locked their eyes on the table in front of them, not even putting Voldemort in their peripheral vision.

"So be it," Voldemort's voice reverberated in the room. "From now on, every mistake that happens in my court will directly go through me; anyone who makes a mistake will have to face me. I will be the judge, jury, and executioner. . . death will not be the worse punishment. I have said so here today." He stood up from his table, and everyone straightened up. "This was a shameful loss, and I despise losing. I have had it enough. Setting up plans just to see them crumble down and fail— I shouldn't have to pay for the mistakes you make, clean up after your mess. From now on, there will be none of it. It's time that the masses remember why they feared me."

Voldemort took a couple steps and arrived at the chair beside the head of the table. "How are the preparations going, Wormtail?" he asked. "I hope

my best Death Eaters don't have disappointment for me. . ."

Pettigrew felt the cold bony hand on his shoulder. If it was anyone in the room in his place, they would've been unable to suppress the shiver and fear. But Peter Pettigrew was the once pathetic and weak man who had survived the horror known as Azkaban, which had broken men much stronger than him. The miserable rat that had gone inside had come out with sharp fangs coated with poison. He raised his head with a stale stone-like countenance and spoke up to the entire room, his voice steady and loud enough to reach every corner without magic.

"Rookwood is gathering Vampire tribes as we speak; the Elders have agreed to our cause in exchange for the promises of hunting grounds. Those who haven't. . . Rookwood has instigated seeds of greed in the mind of young Vampires; even if we aren't and the tribes don't change their mind, the hungry young will switch tribes and join us."h

"Good, situate them in the forests in the west highlands. There are plenty of villages nearby they can feast upon. What about the Giants?"

"Dolohov has gained the approval of the chiefs. They like our offerings. . . and have agreed to come out of dwellings. Six chiefs and their hordes have already begun moving through the country."

"No, that won't do. The Giants need to travel through Portkeys; traveling through lands will attract the Ministry's attention. We can't have them knowing what is happening. Make them take Portkeys to the mountains."

"The Giants refuse to take Portkeys. Three of the six chiefs didn't trust human magic, and listening to them made the other three follow. They will only travel through lands. . . and in doing so cause a natural disaster like havoc. I fear there is no way to hide the Giants leaving their homes to travel across the country. However, I say we can use this. Use the Giants and the attention they will gain as a decoy to hide the other

movements."

It was a good idea. A decoy as impactful as Giants would everything else.

They would be like the sun hiding the stars in the morning. The positive of casting shadows on a plethora of plans outweighed the negative of announcing a hand.

"No"— however, Voldemort didn't like it— "the Giants will do what I want them to do," there was an air of no compromise around him, "if Dolohov can't make it happen, then I will do it myself. Send him a message; I will meet the chiefs."

". . . As you wish, my Lord," Pettigrew bowed his head.

"What of the werewolves," asked Voldemort.

"The Lestranges are rounding up the Werewolves. The packs are scattered around the country because of their territorial nature. They have beg—"

"Is it just the Lestranges?"

"Jugson and Macnair are with them to ensure that the discussions don't break down if Bellatrix gets. . . emotional."

Voldemort hummed.

Pettigrew continued, "The packs around the country have begun to move.

Fortunately, they know better than to reveal their presence. The packs have agreed to not infect others and play with the Muggles as long as they are continued to be supplied with the free wolfsbane. Our efforts with the Werewolf Capture Unit," which were supposed to give results when their Head was killed and replaced with a paid-off individual, "are now being used to turn a blind eye to any problems that might occur during the move."

"Trolls?" Voldemort immediately moved on, which meant he was satisfied with what he had listened to.

"With Mulciber Junior working on it. The Troll specialists we targeted

have been successfully placed under Imperio. They're working on leading the Trolls through the forests, and with the food we'll give them, they'll do our bidding." Mulciber Junior was the Imperius Curse specialist inside the Death Eater organization and had controlled more people during the last reign than everyone else combined. Rookwood had once said that the Unspeakables would've rolled on their bellies to get Mulciber Junior into their ranks for his uncanny skill with the mind-controlling skill.

"When the Trolls are stationed, I'll visit them. . . the specialists might have led them to our site, but they still need to know who they're fighting for."

"As you wish."

"Have the Dementors been behaving well?"

". . . Some are hunting at Muggle prison grounds," Pettigrew said, and for once, he had a strange expression. "We had to disperse them into groups, so it doesn't get obvious. . . and in every group, some Dementors always hunt at prisons near them."

"Ah, is that so," Voldemort nodded in understanding. "Do not worry, let them hunt at prisons. The Dementors have been researched to seek familiar hunting grounds, favoring that familiarity over even the quality of their prey. They have been guarding Azkaban; it's not strange for them to be attracted to Muggle prisons. If the Dementors act strangely, I need to within the hour."— Pettigrew nodded— "What about the Death Eaters?" he asked. "How fast can we get everyone ready?"

"A month," said Pettigrew after thinking of a number. He didn't care for the looks he was getting from others at the table.

"Twenty days," declared the Dark Lord.

Pettigrew looked to the others and shrugged. It wasn't like it mattered to him; he didn't have anything to take care of; his mother was dead due to

stress from all the hate she got because of his actions. . . . As for his revenge, it coincided with the Dark Lord and Death Eaters.

"My Lord," spoke Pettigrew, "may I ask what the plans for these preparations are. I'm sure it's on everyone's mind." No one voiced the same opinion, but it could be seen in their eyes that they were wondering the same thing.

Voldemort walked around the table, his hand grazing shoulders and backs. There was silence until Voldemort rounded around the table and returned to his seat. He stood behind his chair and addressed his Death Eaters, "The opposition. . . has been tougher than we expected. The Ministry Aurors have been slowly but surely picking apart our allies ever since Amelia Bones has taken office. Wizengamot hasn't been our friend with Dumbledore leading that faction of his, and the Grey faction hasn't swayed to our side because of their greed." A rare frown appeared over his face, "Ever since we failed to abduct George West's grandson, the West has increased his business with the Grey faction and is using that to exert control through them to oppose anything we put out in Wizengamot. . . . and recently the Wests have poured gold into DMLE coffers to oppose us."

Even though Voldemort had diverted George's attention through his stint in Germany, it had only worked for so long. The Wests had not only opposed them politically, but he had also been hostile towards the business owned and operated by the Dark faction members, creating bankrolling problems for the Death Eater operations.

"As long as George West stands strong, taking the Ministry will be a long and arduous process," he said.

"What if you pay George West a visit, my Lord. Maybe we can go around and burn his business to the ground," said one of the Death Eaters

viciously with a harsh smirk— but a look from Voldemort made the smirk drain away into palpable nervousness.

"I won't see George West's face if he doesn't want me to," said Voldemort; it would require effort and time to get near George West, time which he didn't have. "And destroying his business will only anger him— and that man will launch an actual combative war against us if we target his work; I will be untouchable no matter what he does, but all of you will undoubtedly die if he wishes for it. I would rather ruin this country to have him give up on it than anger him more than he already is. Don't open your face if you don't have anything useful to say."

"M-My apologies, my Lord," the man sputtered pathetically.

"If we can't take the Ministry, then we will go for the next institution that defines this country— Hogwarts." There were gasps around the table.

Voldemort continued, "I'm tired of Dumbledore standing in my way, and I think it is time for him to leave along with that bird club of his. When I get rid of Dumbledore, I'll get to kill the Boy-Who-Lived to tell the blood traitors, the mudbloods, and anyone who dares oppose that it is time. . . time for despair."

There was a mixed reaction in the group. On the outside, they showed complete and total appreciation for the Dark Lord's target, but inside, some of them were doubtful if they would be able to siege Hogwarts. It didn't have the reputation of being the most secure place in the country for no reason.

"And. . . we need to take care of the pesky little bug that has been buzzing around and ruining our plans," said Voldemort with a cruel light in his eyes.

.

Voldemort - Dark Lord - Fear. Despair. Dread.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Any good new movies. Nothing too dark.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

404. Chapter 404: Visitors To The
Village

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile

The peaceful magical village of Hogsmeade was one of the most sought real estate in the country because of its unique "all-wizard" village status. There were many settlements in the country with only magical population residing in them, but most of them had a non-magical nearby and thus had to exercise caution in how they conducted their lives because of the laws imposed by the Ministry. Then there were magical villages with no non-magical in the vicinity— but none ever reached the level of activity or even size as Hogsmeade.

What Hogsmeade had working for it was the fact that it was located nearby Hogwarts. The records were unclear which came first— the school or the village, but there was no doubt that both were built around the same time. As the popularity of Hogwarts grew with parents sending their children to the castle for studies, Hogsmeade's status also grew. To protect the young future of the magical society, vast lands around Hogwarts were charmed to keep non-magical away, thus granting

Hogsmeade the same environment. In the current day market, a small apartment in Hogsmeade could be exchanged for an excellent bungalow mansion in some of the posh areas around the nation. But was there something special happening in the village? No. Hogsmeade was like any other typical town with homes, shops, and people living their everyday lives. Even the businesses in Hogsmeade weren't high-grade, catering to the super-elite as one would expect from a place with such high property prices. How could they? They were standing beside Hogwarts, which housed students who couldn't afford that sort of money. It was a literal university town.

The only reason why Hogsmeade was so highly coveted was because of prestige. Having a property overlooking Hogsmeade was a luxury only a few had the honor to. All of Hogsmeade had been bought up when it was cheap, hundreds of years ago, and there were only occasional sales which led to ownership rights passing over.

However, in recent times, Hogsmeade had seen some bad times. It was in 1612; during that time, the goblin rebellion had broken nearby, and the village had served as headquarters for the human side. Then Hogsmeade had seen a stretch of peace and safety— until the First Wizarding War, where not even Hogsmeade could escape Voldemort's reign of terror and had often seen Death Eaters and Auror skirmishes. Things settled down when the Dark Lord was vanquished, and it was more than a decade after that Hogsmeade had again come under attack, this time by the hands of Novellus Accionites, who had killed residents, only to be rescued by the infamous Invisible Vigilante.

That was five years ago.

Today, Hogsmeade was at peace. As the morning greeted the village with its first ray of sunshine, the people of Hogsmeade rose up and started

their days. Charmed shovels could be seen shoveling snow off the building fronts and onto the sides. Bakeries and eateries began preparing for the day before they opened up the shop. Soon, people from outside the village arrived in the village for work as the residents also left for their jobs.

"It's awfully crowded today," said Russ, a resident. He looked around the crowded pub and could see more unfamiliar faces than familiar ones.

"I met Balter on the way; he said he and the missus couldn't get a seat at Larry's— everything's occupied," replied Julian. "Is there some sorta festival today or somethin'?"

"I don't think so." Russ walked to an outsider in the pub who was laughing with his buddies at a table and asked, "Hey, mate. Is there a festival today? I live here, and oh boy, I'm seeing an awful lot of new faces today."

The man turned to Russ and spoke with a jovial smile. "Something like that, mate. Today's a day to be happy about. Everyone here is celebrating!"

"I can see that," Julian half-chuckled as he gazed at the sole bartender moving his hand and wand quickly to serve. "Never thought this place would be as busy as Three Broomsticks. . . oh lord, I can't even imagine how Three Broomsticks looks like now."

"I know!" the man laughed. He patted Russ on his shoulder and spoke, "You ain't getting anywhere today, mate. How about you take a bottle two home and tuck yourself in after a good buzz. That's all you're going to get today."

Russ frowned and shrugged the man's hand off his shoulder. He looked down at the man who was still smiling, but now that seemed a tinge sinister.

"Knock it off," one of the man's friends at the table intervened. He gave the man before turning to Russ. "Sorry about that. He didn't mean; he gets like this when he gets drunk. How about we buy you a round.

Anything you like at the bar, please take it as an apology from us."

"Forget it," Russ scoffed. He glared at the man who raised his beer mug to him with a smile. Russ leaned his weight forward and clenched his fist but saw the people around the table shift. He clicked his tongue, turned away, and walked out with furious steps.

"We apologies again," came a voice from behind, but Russ ignored it.

"People have no manners these days," Julius spoke outside the pub.

"Urgh! I want to sock that bastard's teeth in," Russ spat and kicked the snow on the ground.

"Don't be like that. Let's go to me home; I've some great Ember Scotch we can have. That'll get the heat out yer head."

The promise of scotch made Russ agree nicely with a dash of grumbling that Julian listened to while nodding with a smile. Russ took a look back at the pub and couldn't but question himself why he was feeling a heaviness at the bottom of his heart.

...

Inside the bar, the 'friend' gave a cold glare to the man who had picked up a fight. "What was that? Didn't I clearly give you instructions not to stand out, which means not doing this shit," he said acidly.

"I-I'm sorry."

"You should be. If you screw it up, I'll have your head before mine gets lopped off." The scolded man clenched his fists below the table and nodded. "Cut off your drinks; I need all of you sharp and ready. I don't want to hear that you bought an alcohol-expunge potion with you."

Others at the table gave side looks to the man. Not only had he ruined

the mood of the table, but he had also ruined their 'celebratory' drinking.

As the clock wound down, the residents left for their homes, but unlike usual, where there will be only a few a person or two, the bar was still full of people chatting, drinking, and eating. The bartender looked at everyone from behind his counter and glanced at his sole employee, who was also surprised at the number of people still remaining.

The bartender announced, "Last call, gentlemen, it's already after midnight. Get your last drinks, and then it's time to leave. We're closing down for the night."

"Don't be like that, mate; the night has just started," shouted someone.

"No," the bartender spoke sternly, "it's the last call; after that, everyone's getting the fuck out. . . ." He trailed off as he noticed how the bar had gone silent, and not a single voice outside his own could be heard.

Suddenly, he noticed the dozen-upon-dozen pairs of eyes were on him—all the people in his pub were all looking at him without exception. "W-What is this?" He took out his wand and pointed it at everyone. "Get out at once, or it won't be pretty. . . ." He was looking at one side of the bar, so he didn't notice when two red zaps of spell light hit him and his employee.

The 'friend' from the table got up and cracked his neck as he walked to a spot from where he could see everyone in the bar and everyone could see him. He took out his wand and tapped it on his face for his muscles to wriggle and twitch furiously. The hair color changed from black to blonde, and the body shape turned leaner and gained a couple inches. Instead of the average bloke, Augustus Rookwood was standing in front of the people. ""I'm happy to see that I can count everyone that was supposed to be here is here," he said. "But now that everyone has had their share of drinks and had fun for the day, it is time for everyone to

get to work and start what we came here for." He pointed his wand at the unconscious two and chanted— "Imperio"— then he shifted the wand a little and repeated the same. "What are all of you waiting for? Let's start." The chairs in the bar scraped against the wooden floor as people stood up. They immediately began moving as a trained unit— two men dragged the two unconscious men into the back; some went upstairs while most men exited the pub from the front and back. Outside, the Death Eaters began pouring out from different buildings and moved across the village, and soon they positioned themselves all across the village in what seemed a strategic position. They were on rooftops, on street corners, in front of different buildings, and even inside some buildings. It was late at night, and not many residents were roaming outside; those out on the streets were immediately shot down with stunners and harsh ones to those who tried to resist. All of it happened with zero commotion.

Augustus Rookwood looked up at Hogwarts castle with his hands behind his back. The castle was dark throughout; the lights turned off everywhere to discourage students from roaming around after curfew. He observed the castle for ten minutes, but not a single light was turned on inside.

"Sir, everyone is in position."

Rookwood nodded to the man, who was now dressed in Death Eater attire. Rookwood pulled up his right sleeve to reveal the inky Dark Mark; he tapped it with his wand, and it was as though the tattoo was pulling blood as it turned a blood red. There was a pop, and Rookwood and his subordinate both bowed their head.

Voldemort gazed up at the Hogwarts castle with his red eyes. "Is everything ready?" he asked.

"Yes, my Lord. In and outside the village and around the castle as well. .

."

"Give the order to Westen to cut the Floo."

Rookwood raised his head and walked away to the nearest building that the Death Eaters had occupied and announced, "Get me the MagiFax." Immediately a MagiFax was rolled up to him. He took a sheet from his coat, placed it on the scanner, and dialed the WMF-id to send the instructions. "Where's the Floo in this building," he asked. He was guided upstairs and found a simple fireplace with a normal fire burning inside it. He pointed his wand at the fire, and it turned a deep green.

Then he waited. Soon, a minute passed, then two, and when the third minute passed, one of the subordinates spoke, "Should we go check on him?"

Rookwood raised his hand and pointed at the fireplace. The green flame began to flicker as though it was struggling against a gust of wind. The green color started to fade until it was a ghost-green, and then in a split second, the fire abruptly turned orange.

Rookwood walked out of the building and back to Voldemort. "The Floo is down, my Lord. We can begin."

Voldemort raised his wand, and with a long wand movement, white domes became visible over the buildings, but then they turned murky like milk. The wards were disabled by the Dark Lord himself.

Rookwood raised his wand. He breathed out and waved his wand with a spell on his breath; the wand tip glowed amber, and starting from the wall nearest to him, every piece of built structure turned into a metallic red. Every brick, paint coating, tile, marble, and building material changed color.

His eyes went to a pair of men standing in front of a house. One of them pointed his wand at the door, and a spell later, the door was blown up

inside. They rushed inside, and within a minute, spell lights glowed out from the cracks in the curtains. And he knew that it was happening all across Hogsmeade.

Rookwood's attention was taken away when a silver light shot above his head into the air. He turned back and saw magic being shot out of Voldemort's wand. A chain of silver magic shots followed, and a silver dome began to form in the sky, spilling towards an area so vast that it covered everything around Hogwarts and Hogsmeade.

Up in the castle, a light came on.

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Voldemort - Dark Lord - I'm tired of waiting.

Augustus Rookwood - Ex-Unspeakable - Going to add taking over a village to my resume.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Okay. . . things are now definitely moving.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

405. Chapter 405: Trapped &

Isolated

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile

Dumbledore opened his eyes to darkness.

He laid still for a split second; for that brief moment, his mind was at

peace and quiet— but as the next beat clicked in, a dam broke loose. He felt an ocean of magic flood his 'sixth' magical sense, sending his mind buzzing with thoughts. The amount of magic was something he hadn't felt in ages. . . not since he had dueled against Grindelwald. His heart thumped in his chest as he knew that there could be only one who could cause so much magic that his own magic tingled, sounding its discomfort, demanding for this threatening presence to be stopped.

Dumbledore got up from his bed and walked to the window and the curtains parted to show him the source of the terrible magic he was feeling. In the sky, a giant silver translucent cover of magic spilled outwards, forming a dome that arched over Hogsmeade. . . and Hogwarts itself. Pulsating streaks of silver magic rose up to the sky leaving behind a soft ghost-ish trail that began at the Hogsmeade.

Dumbledore's eyes sharpened. He raised his hand; his outer robe fluttered to him, and his wand flew in his arm. He turned and yelled, "Gibby!" A Hogwarts house-elf appeared in the room; she lay on the floor and slowly got up, rubbing her sleepy eyes. "Wake up the professors— all of them. Tell Minerva to raise Hogwarts defenses. It's an emergency; tell them to have their wands ready."

Dumbledore's stern, out-of-place tone zapped Gibby's sleep in an instant. She could barely utter an acknowledgment before Dumbledore vanished away from his room— no one could Apparate or Disapparate within Hogwarts, but being Dumbledore had its exceptions.

The moment Dumbledore appeared outside on the Hogwarts ground, he briskly made his way to the gate that opened to Hogsmeade, and the moment he appeared next to the bricks, the grip on his wand tightened. Voldemort stood a few paces away, holding his wand up, shooting magic into the sky, building the dome that was growing at an alarming rate.

Dumbledore saw Augustus Rookwood looking towards Hogsmeade, where he saw the flashes of magic lighting up the houses and streets mixed in with the occasional shout and scout that were extinguished before they could even get their anguish out.

When Dumbledore looked away, his shocked eyes away from Hogsmeade to Voldemort, the Dark Lord's eyes also moved to Dumbledore. The two opposites met eyes, and for a moment, the time seemed to slow down as the two juggernauts took in the presence and attention of the other.

"Dumbledore," Voldemort started. Rookwood turned at the sound and trained his wand at Dumbledore. "I expected you to arrive much earlier. Is the corrosion of time finally catching up with you? Needed the old man's sleep? I think I can see new wrinkles by your eyes."

"What are you doing, Tom?" Dumbledore raised his wand.

He got a smirk in return. Voldemort bent his elbow as if pulling on something taut before thrusting his wand arm up with force. Magic saturated the environment as Voldemort's wand tip matched the brilliance of a star; the repeating bursts of magic going up in the sky akin to skyshot fireworks were replaced by a thick tractor beam forming a pillar to the sky. The growth in the sky raced, making the previous speed look like a snail's crawl. The silverish canopy that formed over shed a silverish light on the ground, replacing the moonlight on a new moon night.

Voldemort kept his eyes on Dumbledore and pointed his wand at the old Headmaster. "This is the start of the end, Dumbledore," he said and cast a yellow spell that gleamed of death. Dumbledore's body tensed as he casted his shield and aimed it outside the Hogwarts boundary.

Voldemort's dark curse was stopped from entering Hogwarts. Dumbledore narrowed his eyes as he watched the dark magic eat away at his shield,

turning his magic into an ugly sludge dripping down and sizzling on the ground.

Dumbledore stepped closer to the threshold and touched his wand to a brick in the boundary wall. The space between the bricks glowed blue and magic shot up from the wall, and magical glowing blue ethereal bricks began forming a cover over Hogwarts with Voldemort's dome hanging a height over it.

"The boy's time has come to an end, Dumbledore," said Voldemort, "might as well hand him over— and while at it, I think it will be best for everyone that you surrender your life to me after I'm done with him." He raised his wand again, and a bright red pulse burst out. The red light struck the silver dome, and a ring of red travelled out on the dome's silver. "No one is leaving until I get what I want, and all of this over and buried into the ground."

As if coordinated, multiple bursts of pulsating magic rocketed towards the sky from areas around Hogwarts and Hogsmeade. They met Voldemort's dome and became a part of it. The silver glowed brighter than ever, and the dome's growth and construction hastened as it bled downwards faster.

"No one is leaving. . . and neither is anyone coming in now," Voldemort gave Dumbledore an eerie smile that made his already menacing face more threatening.

"Tom, you. . ." Dumbledore's words hitched in his throat. His eyes switched between the magic in the sky, Voldemort and Hogsmeade.

"Dumbledore!" called a squeaky voice. Flitwick came running on his little feet, and the rest of the faculty staff followed behind at a distance back.

Flitwick's feet came to a skidding stop before he intended to stop; he gasped when he looked at the sight outside Hogwarts. The rest of the

professor's reactions were identical. "Dumbledore. . . the Dark Lord, the magic in the sky, the Death Eaters. . . what is happening?!" the half-goblin asked in a stunned tone.

". . . Has Minerva begun priming the defenses?" asked Dumbledore.

"S-She has."

Dumbledore turned to his peers and employees and announced,

"Voldemort and the Death Eaters have surrounded the castle. . . we are now trapped inside," he sighed at the gaps. "But they won't be able to come inside as long as the Hogwarts defense stands."

"That won't be for long," everyone looked at Voldemort. The Dark Lord stepped forward and walked to just in front of Dumbledore and the Hogwarts faculty— they were separated by the magic dome, but despite that, they could see the other party very clearly. Voldemort stared at Dumbledore as he spoke, "How are you doing today, Lily Potter?"

Lily standing among the faculty group dressed in her night clothes, stared at Voldemort with a fearful expression.

"How's your son?" he continued. "He must have grown since the last time I saw him. Seventh year. . . a wizard of age— from a boy to a young man. . . I have been late, haven't I? Let him stay alive for too long. But now that I'm here, I shall remedy that."

"You-You stay away from my children."

Voldemort finally looked at her, and the red eyes shone menacingly.

Dumbledore stepped in between both of them, breaking the eye contact between the two.

"You can't keep defending them, Dumbledore. There will be a time when you and your magic slips. . . and on that day, I'll be waiting. . . waiting for you to make a mistake and open the door to the school to me so that I could teach the children important life lesson. . . to kneel in the presence

of greatness such as myself."

The silver dome flashed in a brilliant, burning magnesium white light before dimming to the point where it was no longer available. "That does it; it's just the both of us now," said Voldemort.

Dumbledore pursed his lips as again, for the umpteenth time, before turning away from and facing his faculty. He looked to the Bill Weasley and said, "Can you keep an eye on them, William? You do not have to worry; the shield will keep you safe as long as you stay behind them."

"Yes, sir," said the youngest of the Hogwarts professors.

"Thank you," smiled Dumbledore reassuringly. "Pomona, please keep Willian company." The Herbology Head of Hufflepuff readily agreed and stationed herself near the blue shield ward with her wand ready.

The rest of the Hogwarts group left and moved to the castle. There were no words exchanged on the way— even though all had questions, the moment Dumbledore had turned, his smile had disappeared, making them hold their tongues. When they entered, they were greeted by a startled McGonagall.

"Albus, what is happening?! Why—"

"Voldemort and the Death Eaters are at our doors, Minerva," said Dumbledore. "They have taken over Hogsmeade, taken the people hostage. Voldemort has cast barrier magic around the castle and the village— and from his words, it has created isolation— no one's going to come in or go out. We can consider Ministry help out of the question for the moment— not until they or we figure out how to get rid of it."

Dumbledore stopped in the middle of the Entrance Hall and remained silent with his eyes closed. He asked, "How much food do we have?"

"For a week or so. . . we can stretch it to ten days," said McGonagall.

Dumbledore opened his eyes. "I do not like that number. We need more

food. . . But before that, we need to alert the Aurors."

"The Floo is down."

"Of course they are," he sighed. "I doubt owls will work either. House-elves?" he asked.

"Gibby can't go out; we are truly trapped," she said. "What about Fawkes?"

"We can try, though I doubt it will work. He's not going to be happy being cooped in the castle."

Lily entered the conversation and suggested, "How about we use MagiFax? I know of an emergency line for family members in the Aurors Office. They'll respond immediately."

"Please do so," said Dumbledore, and Lily ran away.

"What should we do about the children?" asked Flitwick.

Dumbledore followed Lily with his eyes until she was out of sight. "Lock the doors and windows. Not a single child should venture out of the castle walls until we let them know about the situation. We will need help. The older students will have to take care of the younger ones. I will need a talk with the Prefects; the Head of House will talk to everyone fifth-year above. . . And I repeat, no one goes out."

"The Dark Lord," asked Slughorn, still wearing his sleeping cap on his head, "what does he want?"

"For me to be dead. . . along with Harry Potter," Dumbledore narrowed his eyes at the Slytherin Head of House. "Don't even think about it, Horace. Giving Potter won't solve any of this."

"I wasn't thinking about it," said Slughorn, his eyes shifting to the professors. "Then what should we do?"

"Voldemort will try to breach our defenses. I do not know long it would hold him back," at their level, there was no telling, "so we either need to

break their enclosure, or we need to prepare to defend against them in case they break through."

"D-Defend, how many Death Eaters are there?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "I do not know, I only saw Augustus Rookwood, but I'm sure he has brought all of his lieutenants along with him," some terrible names passed through his and everyone's minds.

"Along with those people, there are many more, many-many more— we will be severely outnumbered." He looked his worried employees in the eye, "But do not despair just yet. They might have the higher number, but we this castle. A stronghold to help us defend and protect." Dumbledore's eyes steeled in resolve. He had children to protect, and he would do anything to accomplish that goal.

In the shadow of the night, Hogwarts had turned into a battlefield.

However, the following morning that had a lot to offer of its own.

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Voldemort - Dark Lord - Children make great bargaining chips.

Albus Dumbledore - Headmaster - I was having a pleasant dream. . . only to wake up to a nightmare.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - How was this one?

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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406. Chapter 406: Sounding The

Sirens

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

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[Link in the Bio/Profile](#)

Somewhere in the Auror Office, a Junior Auror fiddled with the dry quill in his hand.

Nights at the Auror Office were usually hectic with drunk idiots going around shooting magic in front of Muggles. But not for Andreson. He was appointed his shift in the back offices, alone in a cabin behind a desk, surrounded by shelves and cabinets full of paperwork. He heaved a long sigh of boredom, blankly staring at his table with nothing to do.

His duty was to man an emergency line open only to family members of Aurors, Hit Wizards, Obliviators, and other at-risk professions inside the DMLE. It was an essential job as being a part of DMLE came with an added risk of making enemies who would sometimes target family members, and thus the department as a whole needed to be on-point, ready to jump to their help and resolve the threat as soon as possible before it could do any damage. However, manning the emergency line was the most boring part of the process— he didn't get to go out on the field and was stuck behind a desk where the only choice of excitement was when an emergency message would be called and he would get to issue a red alert— alas, those moments were far in between.

It being a night shift didn't help. The temptation to set his head down on the table and close his eyes to take a small nap was strong— but something punishable by the internal rules of the office.

Ting!

Andreson's body froze as though hit by a body bind. He removed his eyes from the quill in his hand and looked up to the MagiFax sitting in the corner of the room. The machine was used for making copies of

documents rather than for its primary purpose, so when he heard it make a sound, Anderson couldn't believe his ears. He stared at it, waiting for proof that it wasn't his imagination birthed by boredom but what he thought it was.

Ting!

There it was. Anderson's eyes widened as he stood up from his chair, sending it falling to the ground. He didn't care. The Junior Auror of the night shift ran to the machine and all but ripped the paper out of the tray. His eyes bulged out as he read the words and straightened up. He took backward steps towards the door— and bolted out of the room, leaving the door swinging.

"Ma'am!" he yelled and barged into his manager's office.

Stephanie Izard, Senior Auror, looked up and glared at him. "Do I need to teach you discipline, Anderson? I would gladly send you back to the academy to be graded. If you score anything less than an A-grade, don't even think of coming back."

Anderson ignored the severe words that promised permission and continued spouting, "Ma'am, something just came from the family emergency line!"

Izard sat straighter. She asked, "Who is it?"

"Lily Potter!"

"Potter? Isn't she at—"

"Death Eaters have taken the entire village of Hogsmeade hostage! They have cast a ward over both Hogsmeade and Hogwarts and are planning to break into the Hogwarts!"

"What?!" Izard stood up from her chair.

"He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is there, ma'am. Sh-She, the rest of the Hogwarts professors, and Dumbledore saw him with their own eyes!"

"WHAT?!"

"And they have disabled the Floo system as well! Ma'am, it's an entire mess, and-and—" he thrust the letter into Izard's hand—" please read it on your own."

Izard blankly stared at the paper in her hand. The moment the page left his hand, Andreson paced around the room.

"Call everyone," said Izard.

"Everyone. . . who?"

"Call Robards, all the Captains, the Seniors— call the Hit Wizards— call Scrimgeour, call Bones— call. . . everyone." she looked at Andreson. "This needs all hands on board."

"Yes, ma'am," Andreson turned to leave the office and follow the commands, but when he opened the door, he was met with a figure standing in front of the door. He gasped, "Senior Auror Potter!"

James entered the office and spoke straight to Izard, "Have you called everyone?"

Izard raised the page in her hand. "Got your wife's alert just now; Andreson was about to go— don't stare at Andreson go— I presume she contacted you first?" she asked James.

James nodded.

"Who did you call?" she asked.

"No one. I knew you would be doing it," James sighed and pulled a seat in front of the table to sit down, but the moment his behind touched the cushion, he stood up and began pacing the room.

"How're you feeling?" asked Izard, studying James.

"How do you think I'm feeling?" snapped James. "My wife and children are trapped inside with a monster who wants nothing more than to kill them. How do you think that makes me feel, huh?"

"They're safe," she assured, not minding the harsh words, "they have Dumbledore with them, and the Hogwarts defenses stand strong between You-Know-Who and everyone inside." James' face remained sour; the words didn't help. "What we need to think right now is how to help the people trapped in Hogsmeade— because they neither have the Hogwarts defenses separating them from You-Know-Who."

James groaned. He stopped, and his face contorted as he clenched his fists. There was a few seconds of struggle on his face before all of it was released with a deep breath. "You are right," he said calmly, albeit with a frown. "Hogsmeade needs are help. There's no telling what that evil maniac will do with those poor people. What should be our first plan of action?"

"Scouting," said Izard as both of them sat down. "We need to get eyes on the situation. Send a reconnaissance to get the lay of the land from the outside while we establish contact with Hogwarts to get a view from the inside."

"Lily and I use a charmed pair of mirrors which can show one mirror what the other mirrorface is seeing. I'm sure someone can hop on a broom with the mirror, and we can get a birds-eye look of the situation. Even just simple communication can be more fluid using them."

"Excellent, that's great. What's next. . . they jammed the Floos; we need to find who did it and get them working again."

"Randolph Westen," James spoke after a beat, "the Head of the Floor Authority. Let's call him in— we will need his help to figure out this situation. And we need to gather the people who are in there right now."

Izard immediately got up and walked out to return after a couple of minutes. "I have sent a team; they'll keep anyone from leaving. . . . Let's talk about the ward— You-Know-Who's ward— as long as that's up, we

can't do anything. If we can get the Floos running, we can get inside without breaking the ward."

"If— is the word. I doubt the Dark Lord didn't think of the literal dozens of Floo in the village."

"Doesn't mean we can't try. We will dig through the ground by hand if that's what it takes to get inside."

"I'm the last person you need to tell that," James said with a sharp glint in his eyes. "I will do anything to get to my family. . . anything."

"Yeah. . . that doesn't raise any alarms in my mind," Izard commented.

James gave her a look, but she raised a brow in response, telling him that she meant every word she said.

The door opened up, and Andreson peaked inside the office. "Head Auror has arrived with some of the Captains. He's asking for both of you to join him."

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- (Scene Break) -

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"We have lost an entire village— Hogsmeade, the only all-wizard village — to Death Eaters," Robards spoke to the people in front of his entire team of Captain, Senior Aurors, and Hit Wizard upper hierarchy. They were sitting in the biggest Auditorium in the DMLE with Robards up on the stage. "They have taken an entire village of people hostage," he repeated. "Do you know what that means? They can do whatever the heck they want."

There was not a single positive face in the entire Auditorium. Everyone understood what the term hostage meant and what an entire village full of them represented.

"We are royally fucked here," he spat. He rubbed his face and pointed up,

"Scrimgeour and Bones are up in her office, thinking of how to handle this from a media reputation standpoint— and believe me, if we don't do something about this, whatever they do will be for nothing. The people will come out on the streets, sparking rallies and riots, demanding answers for why we haven't made this problem go away. This thing can go derail the entire country. We have hundreds of children trapped inside that castle— people will have our heads on fucking spikes if something happens to them. SHIT! Those inbred ingrates, I want to wring their necks."

It was a shock to everyone. They had never heard Robards swear in public or even in private conversations, much less this kind of outburst. To see him spouting swear in every other sentence was surreal and so out of character that it deepened the severity of the situation in their minds. "Where are we right now?" he asked.

Izard rose up from her chair. She explained how the Floo was disabled in Hogsmeade and Hogwarts. "I have detained the Floo Network Authority employees for the time being and have sent a team to the Head's house. . . . We have contact inside Hogwarts; we need a setup a reconnaissance team and send them to the ground zero. I propose the team be combatively advanced with Hit Wizards involved, so in case we find Death Eaters outside, we can successfully capture them for information." "Kingsley," called Robards to the black Captain Auror, "prepare a team with Hit Wizards," he looked to the Head of Hit Wizards, who nodded and appointed someone from his own ranks. "Izard, get involved in this— great work on the Floo Network Authority."

"Yes, sir!" Izard returned resolutely before leaving the room along with Kingsley and two Hit Wizards.

"Sir, I would like to volunteer," James got up and announced in front of

the entire crowd.

"Sit down," Robards gestured to James.

"But, sir—"

"I won't say it again, Potter; sit down," the way he spoke and looked at James made it clear that it was an order from Head Auror to a Senior Auror.

James dumped into his chair; his face wasn't a pretty sight to behold.

Sirius sitting beside him patted his shoulder.

Robards continued, "I want the locations of every person on our Death Eater and affiliate list," which was an internal DMLE list of known Death Eaters, possible Death Eaters, suspected Death Eaters, and people associated with Death Eaters. "If you can't find them or have any solid information about their whereabouts, I'll get you a warrant in their names. You have my authorization to bump their status to confirmed Death Eaters and treat them as so— any sign of resistance, you know what to do."

"I need people working on the ward," continued Robards. "Carrott— I need you to make three teams for it— get any expert you can get your hands on; if they refuse to participate, drag them here. I want to know everything there's to know about that damned ward."

"Should I involve Unspeakables?" asked Captain Auror Carrott. The Department of Mysteries was the premier research organization in the country, working on things beyond bleeding edge and state-of-the-art. Robards thought for a second before saying, "I will talk with Scrimgeour and Bones." He gave Carrott a look, "Get results," which meant that he didn't want the Unspeakables involved.

"Understood," Carrott gathered a couple of Senior Aurors as he left.

"Potter," called Robards, and James shot up from his chair, "I want you to

be in charge of the communication—"

The Auditorium door swung open, causing everyone's eyes to go to it.

"Junoir Auror Andreson," Robards identified the sudden and abrupt intruder. "This isn't a place you're permitted to enter. This sort of behavior can get you suspended."

"Yes, sir, I know, sir," Andreson gulped, "but we have a problem you and everyone here need to know about."

"What problem?" Robards' forehead creased.

"I-It's the Invisible Vigilante."

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Robards Gawain - Head Auror - If only I could. . . I could've rained the village with Killing Curses.

James Potter - Senior Auror - All his chain of thoughts, no matter what, only lead to one place.

Stephanie Izard - Senior Auror - Part of the first team to go down to ground zero.

Andreson - Junior Auror - I like the boring office with paperwork better.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Oooh, yeah! Let's get the final arc rolling.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

407. Chapter 407: Another One?

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"I-It's the Invisible Vigilante!"

The entire Auditorium hushed into silence with all eyes on Andreson, hanging on his every word. The Invisible Vigilante, the person who had dumped eighty-five Death Eaters at their door— and had been the reason for the biggest task force formed in a decade. Moreover, that name popping up now made everyone think about the timing and what it could mean.

"What did he do now?" asked Robards seriously. It was a time of turmoil for the country, they didn't want a costumed outlaw adding to the problem.

"He has. . . He has taken a resort in the south hostage," the moment the word left Andreson's mouth, the silence broke like glass against a hammer; there was such uproar that Robards' voice to quiet them failed to reach once, and he had to shoot a firework to the ceiling to silence them.

"Hostage. . . the Invisible Vigilante has taken a resort hostage?" Robards repeated Andreson's words. "What the hell is happening today?!"

Sirius said, "Maybe all wanted criminals are celebrating National Hostage Day and taking hostages of their own."

"Not today, Black," warned Robards in a nonsense tone. He turned to Andreson, "Who all are in the resort? I refuse to believe that he just randomly took over a resort. Do we have a list?"

"Yes, sir," Andreson pulled out a sheet. "A list of guests came along with the report, which alerted us about the incident."

Robards laid his eyes on the list. It wasn't a long list with less than fifty people on it. He read every single one of those names— his eyes lingered on some— before handing the list to James and posed the question" "Do

you see it?"

James received it, and for a moment, his eyes reflected confusion, but as he made his way through it, his eyes widened and reflected an understanding. "The surnames. . . they're related to Death Eaters?" There were surnames in the guest list that matched the [Death Eaters and Affiliates] list that DMLE maintained internally.

It was clear what the list wanted to portray— what the Invisible Vigilante wanted to tell them— that he had taken family members of Death Eaters hostage.

"Do you know what this means?"

". . . That he knew Death Eaters were going to take over Hogsmeade today," James gripped so hard that the page crinkled and crunched under his fist. "He knew this was going to happen, and he didn't think to tell us. . . how does this help, huh? That bastard! The Dark Lord won't care; he will continue on anyway! That arrogant son of a bitch!"

". . . Or that he got to know about it today and decided to take the family members hostage in hopes to counteract the situation."

"You can't seriously believe that," James said with some heat.

"It's one of the possibilities, but yes, I don't think it makes much sense,"

Robards replied. "And seeing that you didn't think of that possibility worries me. . . Black, you're in charge of this— take a team and try to sort this situation out; keep me updated."

"You can't do this," James interjected, "the Invisible Vigilante is my task force's duty. I decide how this is handled."

Robards returned bluntly, "Not with that state of mind, you don't. I fear you'll ignore the safety of the hostages because they're related to Death Eaters and chose to barge inside for a confrontation." He turned to Sirius, "Black, go; it's an order."

Sirius gazed at James for a second before leaving the room.

"Do you want to work on the Invisible Vigilante, or do you want to be involved with Hogsmeade," asked Robards.

". . . Hogsmeade," said James flatly, but there was irritation on his face.

"Then listen to what I'm saying," spat Robards. "You'll be in charge of the communication team— you'll coordinate our teams on the ground and the people inside Hogwarts from here—"

"From here! No. Send me to Hogsmeade; I'll be better there."

"You will stay here as long as I say so," Robards declared. His demeanor exuded seriousness and severity— this was the Head Auror everyone knew. "You have allowed your family's safety to cloud your judgment. I can't trust you down at the field, for the time you will stay and help from here."

"Robards. . . please, don't—"

"If you want this to change, then show me something— something that will tell me that it's okay to trust you to make the right decision and not put hundreds of civilian lives at risk along with your friends and co-workers who work with you." When Robards said that, James looked stunned and even hurt, but Robards didn't take his words back. "I don't take any pleasure in keeping you away from your family, but until I know you can handle yourself as the Senior Auror you are, I'm having you stay put. The second I see it, I will give you the order, and you can leave that very moment."

Robards turned away and returned to address the others, rapidly assigning them duties. James stood there with his fist clenched, puncturing holes into the sheet in his hand. He took a deep breath, and after a few seconds, he was off, out of the Auditorium.

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Sirius blinked his eyes when the rainbow shimmers of the Portkey travel left for the scenery to return to normal. He looked behind his team and saw them having a similar reaction to shake off the travel. They stood in front of the resort in Scotland. Palm trees littered the area with an orange-tiled building in front of them.

"Listen up," he spoke to his team. "The person we might encounter is highly dangerous, and even though he has a history of only targeting Death Eaters— don't think he won't target you. I have met him once, and he thrashed me to the ground," he had told his team about his encounter with the Invisible Vigilante, "so keep your guard up, but don't engage aggressively before I say to do so. And never face him alone— this man stood his ground against the Dark Lord. Get ready, check your gear; we will start soon."

After everyone was ready, Sirius raised his hand and opened up his palm, and at his command, his team split into pairs of two and dispersed to do some scouting, with one pair taking to the sky on brooms. Sirius himself walked to the front of the entrance with his wand in his hand that loosely hung by his side. He raised his brow, glanced down at the sandy path by his foot, and shifted his foot a little before stepping back.

He raised his wand and held it in a reverse grip, and as if stabbing, he pushed the wand forward. The seemingly empty space buzzed and crackled when the wand hit the invisible ward. The yellow magic began to spread out, and in a few moments, the entire resort complex was blanketed by a yellow ward.

"Hostages and wards. . . must be a trend or something," he muttered.

Sirius put his hands behind his back and waited. As he was expecting, it

took less than a minute for a black-clad masked figure to appear at the entrance. Sirius raised his hand and greeted the Invisible Vigilante, "Long time no see," he smiled, "how have you been doing; I'm doing great. On the other hand, you look like you need a bit more sun— how about you shed that mask and get a little tan going. We rarely get this good sunshine; why not take advantage of it. What you say?"

There was not a single sound from the other side. The eyes behind the mask simply stared at Sirius.

"Alright, alright, I get it. I thought we were friends, but I now see how it is. I'm just saying, I'm a great friend to have," Sirius shook his head with a sigh. "So, what do you want? I mean, if you wanted something, you could've sent us crippled Death Eaters as payment; we could've definitely worked out some sort of transactional deal."

Sirius watched as one of the most wanted criminals took a sheet of paper from his pocket and levitated it to him— just behind the ward with his wand.

"Let's see," Sirius leaned forward and squinted his eyes to read, "can't you remove the ward, it's difficult to read. . . no. . . I see, no matter— for you, I'll manage. . . . I see names being highlighted; I know they're from Death Eater families."

"I demand the Death Eaters with the same surnames in return for the hostages. The family member and one other person for one Death Eaters. When I get everyone, I shall let everyone go."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. . . wait a minute here," Sirius raised his hands. "You want us to get you Death Eaters and not the other way around. I don't know if we can do that; you know, we're not in the delivery business."

Again there was no verbal response, but this time Sirius got something that was much more impactful in return. He turned his head back and

saw that his team had returned, and when he looked back, Sirius saw a man wrapped up in ropes fly from within the resort. The person was mercilessly dumped beside the Invisible Vigilante.

"Bartol Lee," said the distorted voice.

The now-named Barnaby Lee thrashed on the ground the moment he laid his eyes on Sirius and tried to roll, worm, and push himself towards the team of Aurors, but a kick from the big black boot made him cower on the ground with pathetic cries leaking out of his stuffed mouth.

"Son of the Lee couple, I want both of them in return for him."

"Listen—"

"Avada Kedavra"

Sirius felt his body freeze as the green flash died, and all movement and sound stopped from the tied-up Barnaby Lee. His team showed a similar reaction, but their instincts propelled their hands to raise their wands for protection.

". . . What did you do?" Sirius pointed his wand straight to the black face.

"Do you know what you just did?"

"I suppose I won't get the Lee couple now, but if you want, you can always get me them. I have helped you in the past, after all," the distorted voice seemed more sinister than ever. "Get me the Death Eaters, Auror. I hope this," he kicked Barnaby Lee's body, "is enough to showcase how much I want my demands fulfilled."

The masked killer turned away and walked into the resort. Sirius' wand trembled as he kept it trained at the back; the spell that had just been used was on his tongue, ready to be unleashed. His eyes moved to Barnaby Lee's body, and the dead young man's blank eyes stared back at him. When he looked up, the Invisible Vigilante had disappeared— and had left the body lying in front of the entrance. . . just outside of his

reach.

". . . Sir," called one of the Junior Aurors.

Sirius didn't remove his eyes from the dead. "Call the rest of the team," he had left half of his team with another Senior Auror to be part of the Hogsmeade operation, "I want every single one of them here as soon as possible. Get me wardbreakers. Get me a team of Hit Wizards. I want to take that bastard's hand and shove it up his arse— take it out and push it down his throat. Why did the Dementors have to leave?"

He turned to his team, "Cast to kill. I don't care if you don't try to capture him— if he breathes in front of you, drop him dead."

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Somewhere in the country, a loud ringing sound broke a sleep.

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FictionOnlyReader - Author - Sometimes my decisions backfire on me.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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408. Chapter 408: Promise &

Peace

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*Beep!**Ting!* *Beep!**Ting!* *Beep!**Ting!*

Quinn opened his groggily and stared at the drawn curtains that were

glowing orange from the sunlight trying to shimmer inside. There was no joy in his eyes as he listened to the noise turning louder with every beep. Today was supposed to be a rare rest day for him where he had told his internal clock that it was okay to sleep in and not fire up the engines early in the morning for the day to come. He had made sure to shut off his alarms just for today— but here he was, listening to two noises that broke his sleep.

He raised his hand from his elbow and pulled in with his magic. From a table across the room, two mirrors flowed to his bed. He laid down on his back and stared at the floating mirrors alternating between showing his reflection and glimmering silver.

"Good morning," with a small smile. The two mirrors showed his girlfriend one on each. The previous irritation turned into a pleasant feeling filling him from the inside out— it was a great start to see them first thing in the morning. The mirrors had been life savers for his long-distance relationship, especially with their current circumstances. Ivy had gifted him the message, and he had made a pair for Daphne so that they could communicate likewise.

"Quinn, it's important." "We have a problem."

"Is that Ivy?" "Did I hear Daphne?"

Quinn said, "Yes, both of you called at the same time. Let's go one at a time: Daphne, if you would." He pinched his fingers out, and the two mirrors expanded in size so that he could get a better look at them.

Daphne's background was what Quinn recognized to be her room. He recognized the shades of lilac along with gold and white in the original green room. "Death Eaters have taken over Hogsmeade, and the Dark Lord has cast a ward that has trapped everyone inside Hogwarts and Hogsmeade," she said in one breath.

Ivy continued from a place that didn't look like her dorm room, "The Aurors have been informed, and the DMLE has already deployed forces to the area outside the ward."

". . . What?" Quinn jerked up and sat up on his bed. He looked incredulously at Ivy and Daphne. "I. . . What— When did this happen? How are you? Is everything alright? Ivy, where are you?"

"Calm down; nothing has happened yet," said Ivy. "I'm in the Room of Requirements. . . needed a little space."

What followed was Quinn getting a download from the girls. They told how they had been woken up and asked to gather in the Great Hall, where Dumbledore addressed the situation they were in, and how Ivy later was pulled aside by Lily and got to talk to James and was able to get some additional facts from the Auror Office's side.

"Father and mum already know," Daphne said, and now after having been given the shocking news, he could see the traces of worry and anxiousness on her face.

Quinn bit the inside of his cheek— he was late.

"What about the Hogwarts defenses?" he asked. "Has the Dark Lord tried to breach them?"

"I. . . I don't know," Daphne said. Ivy shook her head as well.

"What about Hogsmeade? How many were able to get out before the Death Eaters got to them?" Quinn asked Ivy, knowing there were a bunch of Labyrinth doors inside the village.

"The Aurors don't know how many Death Eaters are exactly inside Hogsmeade, but there were enough that only a few— who had wards around their homes— could escape," Ivy bit her lips.

Quinn clicked his tongue. People were idiots. Even though he had put in the efforts to launch Aegis, his family had marketed the service and

streamlined the process to install the ward, but people were ignorant enough to not put them up around their homes. The people with wards had plenty of time to get out of their beds, walk to the Labyrinth door in their house, and leave without looking back.

"Have the Aurors established any contact with the Death Eaters?" asked Quinn.

"Nothing yet," said Ivy.

Quinn closed his eyes for a moment before turning to Daphne, "Can you please go stay with Luna for a while. . . take your mirror with you."

Daphne nodded.

"Thank you," said Quinn with a comforting smile. "I'll be there in a bit.

Don't worry, everything will be alright."

Quinn bid goodbye to them and closed the mirrors. The comforting smile he had held up until the end drained away. He hopped off his bed, went into the bathroom, and stood under the shower for ten minutes as magic cleaned him.

It was time, he thought. Voldemort was outside Hogwarts and had created a situation that couldn't be taken any other way than a straight-out declaration of war in the form of a terrorist attack. This was going to be it. Everything he had been doing for years was for this thing.

He looked down at the chain dangling from his neck with the Deathly Hallows piece.

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Quinn apparated out to the countryside, painted in green. He looked around and saw the stamped-out path between the grass. He was surrounded by trees and flowers that grew in patches; there wasn't a

single sign of urbanization in sight in the quaint village known as Ottery St. Catchpole. The village had both muggle and magical communities, the latter being quietly established after the Statute of Secrecy in the 17th century.

He looked up as the wind whipped his air back. On the top of a small hill stood a strange-looking house that rose vertically against the sky, a great black cylinder shaped like the rook chess piece of the black color. Aptly named the Rook. He walked up the hill and saw the hand-painted signs that hadn't changed since the last time he had been here.

□THE QUIBBLER. EDITOR: X. LOVEGOOD□

□PICK YOUR OWN MISTLETOE□

□KEEP OFF THE DIRIGIBLE PLUMS□

The picket fence creaked as he opened it. The zigzagging path leading to the front door was overgrown with a variety of odd plants, including a bush covered in the orange radish-like fruit. His eyes lingered on a Snargaluff and gave the wizened stump a wide berth. There were two aged crab apple trees without many leaves bent because of the wind, though they were still heavy with berry-sized red fruits and bushy crowns of white-beaded mistletoe. The trees stood as sentinels on one side of the front door. A little owl with a slightly flattened, hawklike head peered down at them from one of the branches.

He rapped three times on the thick black door, which was studded with iron nails and bore a knocker shaped like an eagle. Barely ten seconds passed, then the door was flung open, and there stood Xenophilius Lovegood, barefoot and wearing what appeared to be a stained nightshirt. His long white candyfloss hair was dirty and unkempt.

"What? What is it? Who are you? What do you want?" he cried in a high-pitched, querulous voice, but then his mouth fell open in a perfect,

comical O. "Oh, it's you, Quinn. How are you, son? You have gotten fatter since we last met."

"Hello, Mr. Lovegood," said Quinn. "Would it be okay if I came in? There's something I would like to tell you."

"Of course, of course, come in, come in."

Quinn stepped in and again found himself in the most peculiar kitchen he had ever been in. The room was perfectly circular so that it felt like being inside a giant pepper pot. Everything was curved to fit the walls— the stove, the sink, and the cupboards — and all of it had been painted with flowers, insects, and birds in bright primary colors. Quinn recognized Luna's style: The effect, in such an enclosed space, was slightly overwhelming— he had seen similar flairs in the AID office. In the middle of the floor, a wrought-iron spiral staircase led to the upper levels. There was a great deal of clattering and banging coming from overhead.

"Let's go up," said Xenophilius.

The room above seemed to be a combination of a living room and workplace and, as such, was even more cluttered than the kitchen.

Though much smaller and entirely round, the room somewhat resembled the Room of Requirement on the unforgettable occasion that it had transformed itself into a gigantic labyrinth comprised of centuries of hidden objects. There were piles upon piles of books and papers on every surface. Delicately made models of creatures Quinn recognized Luna telling him about, all flapping wings or snapping jaws, hung from the ceiling.

Luna was not there: The thing that was making such a racket was a wooden object covered in magically turning cogs and wheels. It looked like the bizarre offspring of a workbench and a set of old shelves that

Quinn knew was an old-fashioned printing press churning out Quibblers.

"Excuse me," said Xenophilius, and he strode over to the machine, seized a grubby tablecloth from beneath an immense number of books and papers, which all tumbled onto the floor, and threw it over the press, somewhat muffling the loud bangs and clatters. He then faced Quinn.

"Why have you come here?"

Quinn waved his hand, and a chair appeared in the middle of the room.

"Please sit down," he said.

Xenophilius shrugged, sat down on the chair, shifted in, and got comfortable. "This is a nice chair, would you get me a real one? Or you can leave this one here and come back when this one disappears. . . so tomorrow?"

"More like half a year. . . but I will get you a good chair, Mr. Lovegood—right now, I have something to talk to you about."

"I am listening."

"Sir. . . Death Eaters has taken over Hogsmeade," Quinn paused and let the words sink in. Xenophilius' flighty eyes returned back to earth as he stared at Quinn. "The Dark Lord lead the invasion and has taken the entire village as his hostage. Then he proceeded to cast a ward over the village. . . the castle. . . and the area around— all have been locked off to the outside. The Dark Lord plans to break the Hogwarts defenses and kill the Boy-Who-Lived. The defenses stand strong, and Dumbledore is inside —"

"Luna. . ." Xenophilius looked ghastly and aged decades; all the quirky joy had vanished. "My Luna. . ."

Quinn saw the man in front of him spiraling, so he injected magic into his voice and said, "Luna is safe, Mr. Lovegood. DMLE has occupied their area. . . Hogwarts is the safest place in the country. . . Dumbledore will

die before he lets the Dark Lord touch the kids— he holds the Elder wand, sir, the Elder wand."

The magic seeped into Xenophilius, and his eyes remained fixed on Quinn. The panic and despair were absent as the old father hung onto Quinn's words.

"The Elder wand. . . the Deathly Hallow?" muttered Xenophilius.

"Yes sir, the Deathly Hallow. Albus Dumbledore and the Elder wand. . . that's something even the Dark Lord will struggle against. Luna will be safe." Quinn took out the mirror from his pocket and injected magic into it. The mirror surface shimmered a couple times before Daphne's face became visible.

Quinn spoke with magic, so it wasn't heard by Xenophilius: "Luna," he said. Daphne nodded, and the image in the mirror changed to Luna's. For a moment, he just stared at her— it had been a long time since he had seen her. . .

"Mr. Lovegood, look who it is," Quinn said and handed the mirror to Xenophilius.

"Daddy?" came Luna from the mirror.

"Luna? Luna!" Xenophilius brightened up at the sight of her daughter inside the mirror. "Oh, my dear sweetheart. . ."

Quinn exited the room and walked downstairs, giving the father and daughter some space. He sat down in the kitchen and stared outside the window at the sky. He took in the silence. It was probably going to be the last peaceful moment he was going to have until everything in a while— he savored it.

Time passed. Not once did he go up to check on Xenophilius. Eventually, he heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Quinn turned to see Xenophilius looking much more relieved than before, but there was still a

worry in the line on his face.

"How is she?" asked Quinn.

"Grand, she says. . . she looked well." Xenophilius placed the mirror on the table in front of Quinn, "She told me to return it to you. . . thank you."

"You don't need to be. Anything for Luna." Quinn stood up. "I will now leave, sir. . . . Sir, I promise, I will bring Luna back home safely. So please rest assured." He walked to the door and was about to leave when he heard.

"You will bring her home safely. . . how? The Dark Lord—"

"The Dark Lord won't harm her," Quinn didn't look back. He paused, and when he spoke again, a guttural, distorted voice said: "I will kill him before he so much as he breathes in the same area as her."

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Quinn West - MC - Oh boy, finally screen time.

Xenophilius Lovegood - Father - Eccentric, Eccentric, Eccentric.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - If you notice in the previous chapter, the Invisible Vigilante uses a wand.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

409. Chapter 409: How To Get In?

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

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Inside a house in Hogsmeade, three men sat in the dark back room around a round table in utter silence. All three men had their wands in their hands, ready to exercise their gift of magic at a moment's notice. There was a creaking noise, and all three men tightened their grips on their wands as they silently stood up and stepped into different corners of the room, disappearing into the shadows. Footsteps closed in towards the room until a man entered the room. The moment he stepped in, the three men stepped out of the shadows and sat themselves back on their tables. "How was it?" asked the short man named Bernard. A man quick on his feet and quicker with his wand.

Thomas, who had just arrived from outside, loosened a strap on his dragonhide armor. He sighed, "It's bad. . . they are everywhere. Stations on every corner. . . organized patrol in groups of three. . . sentries on rooftops. . . these guys are not joking around." He looked at his companions and asked, "What should we do?"

Samuel, the bulkiest of all, leaned back on his chair, making it creak. "Greengrass girl is inside the castle. We obviously can't get in there. . . and from the looks of it, we can't walk out of this mess," he said.

Then, Anthony, the final member, suggested, "How about we go to the Dark Lord and offer our services— enroll if it is needed. I mean, right now, we don't have a problem with food and water— but as the time passes, we will run into that problem. . . . It's a good suggestion, what do you all think?"

"Food and water?" Bernard quirked his brow. "We are four people in a village full of empty houses. We can horde enough food that will last us a while. Why are you thinking about food and water now?"

"We need to think about those things. We don't know long we will be

here."

"You think we will be here for a while?" voiced Thomas. "I saw Aurors flying over the ward. I think it's only a while before they breach the ward, and we apparate right out of this shit show."

Anthony scoffed, "You saw it, right? The Dark Lord cast the ward. The Aurors ain't going come in here no way soon. We will be trapped here for a while. If we don't go now, he might not take it kindly. . . and I don't need to say about his reputation."

"Or he kills us anyway," said Samuel. "We can find a Labyrinth and get the hell out. Someone in this town is bound to have one."

"Uhhh," Bernard shook his head, "that's not as easy as it sounds. People hide their Labyrinth doors in their houses, and everyone puts their own sort of locking mechanism on them— even if we find them, we don't know if we could unlock them. With every house we go to, the risk of us getting caught increases. I don't like it; too much risk."

"So, what you guys say we do?"

"Well, for one, when we get out of here, we don't take any more business from George West. The Dark Lord is not part of any services we offer.

This was supposed to be a simple watch and sit," scoffed Thomas. "I am going for a vacation after this, so you three are on your own."

"I say we should sit and wait it out," said Bernard. "Horde some food and water to last us a while and just stay out of sight. All agree?"

"Disagreed."

All set of eyes widened, and all four in the team whipped their heads to the voice. Standing by the door was a skeletally thin figure with waxy and reptilian features, bone-white skin, and blood-shot sclera with dark scarlet eyes with cat-like slits for pupils. He had a chalk-white face that resembled a skull, snake-like slits for nostrils, and large hands with

unnaturally long fingers like spider's legs.

The four mercenaries immediately moved their wands towards the intruder, whom they recognized at once even without ever seeing him.

"No," said Voldemort. One word and a bare twitch of his wand from him caused all four to rise up into the air from the chairs. Their wands left their hands as they went to their throats as their mouth foamed. "I will generously impart you a never-ending vacation."

Their eyes trembled in world-ending, mind-shattering, heart-thrashing panic.

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Quinn looked at the silver dome with large veins spreading in all directions across the surface. He looked down at saw the Hogsmeade village from the sky. He had to apparate to an area along the railway track on which the Hogsmeade Express ran because Voldemort had warded an area so huge that he couldn't remember an image of the place to apparate, so he had to apparate to a place where he had seen during seven years of travel and then fly from there to outside Hogsmeade.

That's a big ward, Quinn thought. He could feel a magical pressure emanating from the silver ward. He roamed his eyes to the ground and spotted an area with dense trees, and lowered himself to the ground in the middle of the trees. He didn't want anyone to see him, and while he had flown around, he had seen an Auror base on the ground and multiple Aurors on brooms in the sky. The trees were the best place to take cover. He pushed aside a bush and stepped near the ward boundary. His brows wrinkled when he saw the trees and plants that had been dissected and carved up where the ward had touched them as if it as a laser blade.

"Okay, let's see what we can do here," Quinn muttered as he dismissed his mask. He raised his hands near the glowing silver, and his skin beneath his gloves tingled from being so close to a magic that his body could tell was dangerous. The magic gently flowed out of his fingertips and quietly caressed the surface. His magic interacted with the ward and sent him back inputs that his brain translated into information.

After a while, Quinn groaned and backed off. The ward was. . . tough. It was exceptionally well made, and he could tell it was exotic magic with roots he could barely recognize. "Why couldn't he just be some dumb brute," he sighed.

The ward was strong. From the initial look, there were no clear points to exploit. He could probably find things to exploit if he gave it time, continuous effort with a worry-less concentration. . . things that he didn't have. He didn't have time because Voldemort was similarly working to break the Hogwarts defenses, and he had to make sure to keep a part of his mind alert to keep hidden.

He had to find a different way to get inside.

Try to get in with Aurors? No, they themselves might take too much time to get in if they ever did.

What else?

There was only one option he could think of.

Labyrinth.

They were Labyrinth doors inside Hogsmeade, which he could target. But there came a problem with it. The Labyrinth system was made in a way that, when opened a door was opened, it would open to a random exit point placed around the country. However, the doors couldn't be opened the other way around. The doors could only be opened one way— even Quinn himself couldn't go to one of the exit points and open the door to

get into someone's house. Labyrinth doors were supposed to be extremely safe— and if Quinn added a key to open the doors from the outside, he would be giving a keyhole to the world— which someone eventually be able to make a key for.

But there was one thing he could do. He had made every door and exit point by hand personally and thus knew every one of them had a unique signature that only he could make out because of his situation as the creator. And while he couldn't open the doors from outside, he could connect a door to a specific exit point for a single turn. And because he knew which door went to which home, he could pinpoint a door and connect it to his preferred choice of exit.

But the problem started after that. Even if he could connect the doors, there was no way for him to open the door from inside. So he needed someone from inside to open the door, which meant he needed to make contact with someone from inside.

He looked at the ward, and the chances of that happening were low. Not to mention, even if he met someone, there was no telling if he could convince them— there was a ward that stopped magic from going through. . . but there were always exceptions. . . no magic was perfect.

There was something he could do.

He sighed, "It would've been so much easier if I just installed a Labyrinth inside Hogwarts," he had not done so and was regretting it dearly.

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"Give me a report, Shacklebolt."

Kingsley turned back and saw Robards walking to him. He turned back to the ward-covered Hogsmeade and jutted his chin to the silver barrier that

stopped him from going inside. "The experts we got are already working on how to breach the ward," he said.

"How is that going?"

". . . It's a tough ward, sir. I talked to them after they had worked on it for a couple of hours; they weren't optimistic about a quick entry— it's not looking good."

"How fast can they enter?"

"Days. . . a week if nothing goes wrong, and things always go wrong. I think it might take two or even three weeks. . . that is if we don't call in someone better?"

"Do I have to call in Unspeakables?"

"Or you can call someone from outside the country."

"That. . . can work, but that'll take time. You can't just find people who will be willing to come work on a ward cast by the Dark Lord," Robards sighed. Any person who came here had their lives in danger— it was possibly one of the most dangerous situations currently in the world.

"Unspeakables will be better in this situation," he sighed. "I will contact them— I'm sure they're waiting right for it to come. . . or maybe they are already here, hiding somewhere, already working on the ward."

"I would like that," said Kinglsey. "How's the Invisible Vigilante situation going?"

". . . He killed a kid."

Kinglsey turned to Robards with a shocked expression. "What," he uttered. "What?" he said again.

"Not really a kid— twenty years old. . . but that's still a kid. He has taken the kids of Death Eaters hostage and demands their parents in exchange. Both of Barnaby Lee's parents are Death Eaters. He made an example out of him— kill the boy before Black could utter a word. All the kids he has,

all of their parents, are in there."

"The Dark Lord won't budge from that."

"I know. I always suspected he was a madman. It will take a day for Black to get in there and take him out."

"Does he need back-up?"

"Hit Wizards will be backing him up when they enter. They want to get the credit for taking down the Invisible Vigilante. . . they're sending a lot of themselves down there to take him down."

"Should we also—" Kingsley stopped. "Sir. . ."

Robards followed Kingsley's line of sight and his back straightened, and his entire body tensed from head to toe. His hand went straight to his wand and pulled it out, and so did every person the moment they saw the Dark Lord walking towards them.

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Quinn West - MC - I need to get in there.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Today is Quinn's birthday. Wish him well.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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410. Chapter 410: Demands &

Reunion

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The Aurors shrunk in their dragonhide armors as they saw the matchstick thin figure dressed in a simple robe walk towards them. There was a seemingly impenetrable ward between them which, while kept them outside, also kept what was inside from coming out. There were tens of them, but the sight of the man sent chills down their veins. In his presence, Augustus Rookwood, who walked along with him, seemed almost insignificant despite being an ex-Unspeakable and a notorious wanted criminal.

He stopped a few steps away from the ward boundary and leisurely watched a literal army of Aurors, and Hit Wizards assembled as though there wasn't even a shred of fear and caution in his mind.

"Gawain Robards," called Voldemort.

All eyes turned to the Head Auror. Robards took a moment to gather himself before stepping forward, passing by Kingsley Shackleboth, who had his wand ready to cast.

"Dark Lord," said Robards. "I would suggest that you stop this farce and free Hogsmeade. They are innocent people who haven't done anything to warrant this. Release them and surrender yourself alongside your Death Eater subordinates." While Robards' voice and tone seemed as concrete as usual, his Aurors could tell there was a difference and knew the reason behind it.

"Oh?" voiced Voldemort, sounding amused. "Gawain Robards— Head Auror, quite an accomplishment. I remember you. . . you were a Senior Auror during my last reign. You were there, in the middle of it, part of the pointless conflict against me."

Robards clenched his fist. He had experienced what Voldemort and his Death Eater in power felt and looked like. He had been part of the resistance against the vicious Dark Lord. Hearing his and his peers,

friends' efforts being called pointless boiled his blood.

Voldemort's voice went flat and hard as he continued, "You were there in the middle of it all. . . so you should know about it. When have I never needed justifications to do as I wish. . . . I'm the rightful ruler, owner of this country, I can do whatever I want with it."

"You!" Robards had no words in his shock.

Voldemort looked to Rookwood standing a step behind. The ex-Unspeakable stepped to the front, and for the first time, the Aurors noticed that he had something with him. The pressure from standing face to the Dark Lord had limited their observation. The bag with Rookwood floated beside, and when he pointed his wand to the ground, the black load dropped in front of them. Rookwood twitched his wand, and the seams of the black cloth came apart, revealing the bag's contents.

It took a moment, but a wave of gasps rushed the Aurors. Inside the bag was a man in bad shape, he looked like he had been beaten badly, but that wasn't what shocked the Aurors so much.

"Trent," Kingsley muttered.

Trent Wilgams was a career Junior Auror who had no possibility to rise to Senior Auror because of his work ethic, ability, and leadership skills, which never rose to warrant him a chance at promotion. He had been positioned at Hogsmeade, and the village was his area of responsibility, along with a couple of younger Junior Aurors working him as their leader.

"He was found passed out at a pub, drunk out of his mind," said

Voldemort, looking at the roughed-up man with disinterested eyes.

"Couldn't even put up a fight in his state, couldn't even open the clasp on his holster— such an embarrassment. . ."

Robards gritted his teeth in anger but held his tongue. He needed a little

more time to think of words. There was an Auror in the terrorist's grasp; he couldn't carelessly say something that would put Trent's life at risk.

"I have demands," declared Voldemort.

". . . Demands?"

"I want the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and the Ministry as a whole to not interfere with what is happening here. If my demands are met, I shall let every one of the Hogsmeade residents, along with Hogwarts students and professors— bar Harry Potter and Dumbledore— leave here alive when I'm done. Of course, I can't promise the safety or mortality of the people if they oppose me. However, as long as they stay out of my way, I shall generously let them live to tell my tale."

"That's—"

"If my demands are ignored or not agreed with, and the Ministry attempts to breach my ward, I will send every man, woman, and child I can set my eyes on into the embrace of death. I will raze the village and the castle to the ground and destroy the history along with the people. After I'm done with them, there won't be a Hogsmeade of Hogwarts. So think carefully before you do anything. If I see any attempts to breach my ward, I will take it as a refusal to meet my demands."

Robards had nothing to say at the moment; he couldn't refuse, nor could he agree; he needed to think about it before making any decision, so he decided to change the subject. "The Invisible Vigilante has taken the children of your Death Eaters hostage," he said. "He is asking for their parents in return for the children. I ask for those parents to surrender for their children's safety. If they come into our custody, we can negotiate with the Invisible Vigilante to let the children go without handing them to the Invisible Vigilante." While he was in no mood to negotiate, there were still innocent people in that resort who still needed to be delivered

safety— and this was how the best of both worlds.

Voldemort stared at Robards for a few seconds before turning away along with Rookwood raised Trent up with magic, making many Aurors shag their shoulders— but then Voldemort turned back. "It seems I haven't made myself clear." He pointed his wand at Trent, and the wand tip glowed green.

Seeing that, Robards yelled with his wand going up, "NO!"

But it was all for naught, the green jet hit Trent's body, and everyone present knew what had taken place.

"As I said before, the Ministry doesn't interfere," said Voldemort before again turning back to walk away with Rookwood following him. "Just remember what you will be forcing upon the innocent people if you try to get inside."

"You monster!" A young Junior Auror yelled forth and raised his wand to Voldemort — "Avada Kedavra!" — A green jet coursed out and zapped towards Voldemort; it passed through the ward because there was no known magic known to stop the Killing Curse. Voldemort didn't even look back as an earthen wall rose up behind him and Rookwood. The green curse met the wall, and the magic was no more.

The dirt wall then crumbled, and Voldemort turned to look at the Auror.

"Aurors casting the Unforgivables doesn't seem right. . . let me show you how it is done," he raised his wand and chanted: "Avada Kedavra" —there was a green flash much faster than the Junior Auror, and it hit that Junior Auror in the chest, and the young man was dead. "There you go, two dead Aurors. . . what a waste."

Voldemort looked at the Auror crowd before turning again; this time, no Auror stopped him as he walked away.

There was a long spell of silence as the Aurors stared at the dead body of

Trent that had been left there.

"I get it now," said Robards. Kingsley looked at him. "I get why he was so angry. . . seeing that," he pointed at the dead body, "and knowing you can't reach it, and it will stay there. . . is infuriating." He looked up at the sky, which had already reached the morning glow. "All of them are the same. . . doing whatever they want. . . not caring about anything. . . ignoring the law. . . causing harm, costing lives. . . all the fucking same. . ."

There was a moment in which Robards closed his eyes and didn't speak another word, "I'm calling the Unspeakables. They will find me a way inside and will do it quietly." He turned to Kingsley and ordered, "I want Dumbledore in Hogsmeade when we find a way inside. I don't care what you, James, and Sirius need to do— pull in every Order of Phoenix favor you all have to, get yourselves in his debt— but I need Dumbledore out facing the Dark Lord while we clean up the Death Eaters. . . . Do you understand, Captain?"

". . . Yes, sir."

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Voldemort had threatened the Aurors to not interfere and warned them that if he saw them tampering with this ward, he would start dropping bodies. And he had meant every word of it. So, Death Eaters were sent to patrol the boundary from the inside to make sure the Aurors were keeping their promises.

One such patrolman was named Gerald, and scouting one of the many sections of the ward boundary was part of his duty. He bit on a slice of bread that he had got from a pub. Coming here had been a stressful

process, and he had skipped two meals to calm his nerves. He hummed a tune to fill the empty space to fill it with something— and he was walking along checking the boundary when he heard.

"Daddy."

Gerald stopped as if something had clutched his feet and legs. His body began trembling before he even turned toward the voice because he was afraid of what it was going to be. His heart beat as he turned, his throat cracked, and his eyes blurred as he saw a boy who couldn't be any older than five standing outside the ward.

"Daddy!" squealed the boy happily.

Gerald took steps towards the ward boundary and dropped to his knees on the wet grass and mud. "Troy," he croaked. "My boy. . . my baby boy," he cried as tears began pouring out of his eyes.

"Daddy!" Troy giggled. "I want to play!"

Gerald inched closer to the wand boundary and was about to touch the silver glow when he stopped as its threat entered his mind. He then saw Troy moving ahead with his pudgy legs. Gerald yelled, "Troy, stop! Don't come here!" He couldn't lose Troy after he had lost him once. He had just gotten his baby boy back, and he wasn't going to let Troy leave him again.

"I want Daddy," said Troy and took another step forward.

"Okay, okay, okay," Gerald repeated. "Daddy knows another way; daddy will come to get you, so don't come here and go to the tree behind you.

Daddy will come to you." Troy went back as he asked him to do. But

Gerald had other problems; he didn't know how to get out of here— they couldn't get out; there were orders, and if he broke them, it meant death.

'You can use Labyrinth door,' a voice whispered in his mind— his own voice. 'Take a Labyrinth door, step outside, and get to Troy?'

'The Labyrinth doors still work?'

'Yes, they do.'

'I-I need to find a Labyrinth door.' He looked and saw Troy playing with his favorite toy Quidditch player action figures. Troy looked at him and smiled as he waved. Gerald waved back.

'House-03, Street-12, Second floor. . . Mayer's house. Find it.'

Gerald got up and dusted his pants, "Troy, stay there; daddy's coming to you," he said.

"Okay!"

Gerald turned, sprinted towards the Hogsmeade, and didn't take a look back. If he did, he would notice Troy staring at him with unblinking eyes, and even if he turned back, he wouldn't have caught the two stone-grey eyes gazing at him from the shadows.

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Quinn West - MC - Eyes cameo.

Voldemort - Dark Lord - I have made myself clear.

Gerald - Death Eater - Running faster than he had ever run.

Gawain Robards - Head Auror - Sometimes black and white are better than grey.

Kingsley Shacklebolt - Captain Auror - I'm worried. . . but I don't have any better idea.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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411. Chapter 411: A Chaotic

Choice

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Lunchtime at Hogwarts was drastically different from the usual vibrant gathering of people. The people were still there, but the vibrancy and the sheer energy of young students had been snatched, leaving behind a dull grey ambiance in the room.

Ivy looked around the Great Hall, and she could see more people who were toying and stabbing at their food instead of actually eating and enjoying the meal. Even Ron by her side hadn't piled up his plate with food and was swirling a breadstick in his bowl of soup which had a long cold. Not even at the Slytherin table could she see the children of 'Death Eaters' glancing around nervously— clearly scared of retaliation from hundreds of wands, blamed for the current situation, no wonder why some looked much worse than everyone else in the Great Hall.

She sighed as she failed to spot even a single happy face and was sure the tables would've been much emptier if Dumbledore hadn't declared attendance at Great Hall during meal times to be mandatory. Many older students wished to oppose and resist the decision and had come close to it, but one look at Dumbledore's face told them that the Headmaster wasn't in any mood for discussion.

"All of you should eat something," she lightly said to her friends.

Hermione looked at Ivy and then at her plate. Ivy followed her eyes and glanced down at her plate to find that her serving of pasta had turned into a gooey clump from not being touched. She looked up at Hermione and saw her looking up at the ceiling.

For the first time since she had entered the Great Hall for the first time during her first year, the ceiling that had been charmed to reflect the sky above had been turned off. She thought that she and everyone here were among the rare group of people in the entire Hogwarts history that had actually seen the actual Great Hall ceiling without the charms. . . and it was pretty standard, just like as anyone would expect a ceiling to be. . . there was no secret hidden in it, as many had theorized over the years. "The Aurors. . ." Ivy turned her attention to Dean Thomas, who was sitting close by with Ginny by his side. The dark-skinned boy spoke quietly, ". . . they will be able to break the ward and rescue us. . . right?" He was looking at the table, and the jovial look usually in his eyes was nowhere to be seen.

"Of course, they will," spoke Harry with confidence. "Entire Ministry is working on rescuing us and beating Voldemort," people gasped, but Harry didn't look abashed at all. They were inside Hogwarts, and if Voldemort couldn't come inside, no Snatcher could even dream of it. "How do you know that?" The people who had been attracted by the conversation and listening all turned towards Seamus Finnegan, who posed the question with a dark look on his face. "This is You-Know-Who we are talking about. Even if they were able to break the ward, how would they go against him? He isn't even alone; he has his Death Eaters with him."

"They have Aurors and Hit Wizards together. . . he can't be that strong, can he?" asked Dean, worried.

"Me dad doesn't think so, he said—"

"We have Professor Dumbledore," Harry budged in and cut Seamus off. Everyone around him at the Gryffindor table and even those Hufflepuff tables were now looking over. "Voldemort. . . stop flinching. . ."

Voldemort fears Professor Dumbledore, which means he can't defeat him.

Dumbledore will never allow Voldemort to win."

"Then why hasn't he done anything," questioned Seamus; he looked at the Headmaster, who was at the head table talking to McGonagall. "If he can defeat him, why hasn't he done so already?"

Hermione supplied the response to his question. "Because of Hogsmeade.

They have taken the people of Hogsmeade hostage," she glanced at the head table. "He must be waiting for the Aurors to be in a position where he doesn't have to worry about their safety and can focus on facing him."

As if he was listening, Dumbledore turned to them. Everyone froze and looked away and started eating their food. Ivy glanced back at

Dumbledore, but he was already back talking to McGonagall.

"So," Hermione finished her explanation, "the moment the Aurors rescue Hogsmeade hostages, Dumbledore will duel. . . Voldemort."

Ivy thought so as well. But she had another thought that stemmed from a conversation she had with Quinn where he had said: "Voldemort and Dumbledore are much more powerful than anyone thinks they are. If they truly fought, they would wipe out villages without even trying—they're monsters who can't express their magic to the fullest because of the consequences. . ."

That had spurred the thought that the reason why Dumbledore hadn't stepped out to face Voldemort was that if things got severe and the two 'magical monsters' let their magic out, Hogsmeade wouldn't look as it stood now, and the lives and safety of anyone in the vicinity couldn't be guaranteed.

But even knowing that, Ivy couldn't help but desire to witness their fight.

She picked up her fork and decided that even though she wasn't in the mood to eat, she should at least finish what she was put on her plate. Her

fork was about to stab the pasta clump when she heard something that shook her mind.

"Habitants of Hogwarts. . ."

Even though she had never heard it, she knew precisely who the voice belonged. It boomed around the castle, touching every wall and corner of the grand magical castle. None in Hogwarts didn't listen to the voice, and it echoed in their chests, thrumming inside their body.

At the head table, Dumbledore stood up with stoney emotions etched on his face as he looked somewhere far away into the distance, his gaze passing through the walls towards the source of the voice.

". . . listen to me, to Lord Voldemort," continued the voice, and everyone in the Great Hall shivered as a commotion erupted— but the voice continued as clear as crystal with a hint of eerie chill mixed in: "Today, I arrive at the doorstep of the place that my ancestor Salazar Slytherin helped build. Today, I arrive here to take the first step to take what is rightfully mine. This country has devolved into something of a mockery with those unworthy of the gift being allowed to grow. I wish to return this country to its lost glory— return it to the country that had once birthed Merlin himself. . ."

It was as if Hogwarts itself hung onto Voldemort's every word. Nothing and no one made a single sound, fearing they would miss what he was saying.

". . . but before I do that, I need to accomplish something first.

Understand that I hold no desire to hurt any of you— the children of Hogwarts are the future of this great country, and I wouldn't even dream of harming them. . ." Despite how impossible it sounded, the words caused hope to sprout in many people's minds. ". . . But beware if you stand in my way, will be struck down without mercy no matter whoever

they are," and that sent a shiver and fear to the depth of many's souls.

"I call to you in this way, for I can use your service. I offer all of you to gain my favor if you can accomplish one simple task. . . . Turnover Har—"

Dumbledore got up and swung his wand in a grand gesture, and immediately the voice was extinguished, letting the silence replace it. Everyone turned to Dumbledore, but he had his eyes trained ahead. For a moment, silence became too loud. . . and then a screaming voice louder than before returned, and if it was not audible before, it was now.

"HAND HARRY POTTER AND HIS FAMILY OVER, AND I GIVE MY WORD THAT EVERYONE, AND I SAY EVERYONE, OTHER THAN DUMBLEDORE, WILL LIV—." Again Dumbledore worked his magic, and Voldemort's voice was quelled again.

This time no one looked at Dumbledore. Instead, Ivy felt hundreds of pairs of eyes on her, and it made her want to shrink into herself until she could disappear. She wished so much that she could pull out the Cloak of Invisibility and simply vanish out of the Great Hall to escape the eyes staring holes into her. Ivy looked at Harry and was surprised to see that he was sitting there calmly without a hint of nervousness or unease on his face.

She had always known that even though Harry was somewhat uncomfortable with mass attention that came because of his identity as the Boy-Who-Lived, he had long become used to it. But now, as she saw her brother sitting there unbothered while she was feeling a burning sensation from the stares, she understood how her brother's life had been.

Dumbledore announced, "Harry, Ivy, to the ante-chamber, please—immediately."

Harry stood up, and Ivy hastily followed after him, completely following

his lead because she didn't know what to do and think.

"Harry," she said.

"Don't worry, Ivy. We're fine; you don't need to worry about what he said."

"But—"

"Dumbledore won't give us out even if everyone in the castle wants us out. And I'm sure more people will refuse to agree with Voldemort's demand than agree with him. . . no one will believe that maniac's words. He would kill every Muggleborn the moment he steps inside the castle, so don't worry— we don't have to talk to anyone who isn't close to us."

"I. . ." Ivy couldn't voice her thought or even properly formulate them. But even then, she couldn't help but feel a deep sense of worry about what had just taken place.

As they entered the ante-chamber, she saw Lily already in there. "Mum," she called as Lily hugged her.

Lily combed Ivy's hair and gently said, "It's okay; no one is going to do anything that monster said." She also took Harry into her motherly hug.

"Dumbledore and the other professors are going to make everything clear, so don't worry about it; throw it out of your minds, relax, and don't let it affect you. . ."

Ivy hugged Lily back, but she couldn't ignore the bad feeling in her mind. She wished Quinn would be here, and she would feel safe enough to make the bad feeling go away. She wished that she could leave and be alone to talk to him.

. . .

Quinn, the person in question, was nowhere near Hogwarts and was in another part of the country, staring at the door in an alley in front of him with an intent look.

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Quinn West - MC - Presence only.

Ivy Potter - Worried - I don't feel great right now.

Voldemort - Dark Lord - I have given a choice. . .

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

412. Chapter 412: Getting In

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

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Link in the Bio/Profile

Quinn stood in a deserted alleyway dressed with not a soul in sight.

There was a criterion to place Labyrinth exit points, and locations less visited by the non-magical people were high pointer— to be unseen exiting a Labyrinth exit point was paramount, and thus, every exit came with an area ward that sent non-magical eyes wandering in other directions. Moreover, there was a committee place that would regularly review the locations to adapt to the ever-changing non-magical world.

He stared at the wall covered with posters in front of him. The entire neighborhood had once been a booming residential area until it had been abandoned and was yet to be re-developed, making it perfect as an exit point.

'I wonder if this was the wrong way to get in,' he thought with a strand of worry. He hadn't been in the house he had sent Gerald to and only knew

that address contained a Labyrinth door. He didn't know the layout, where the door was placed, or how it was hidden— the plan's success was heavily based on Gerald's ability to locate and discover the door.

Gerald. . . He hadn't been chosen because of a reason; Quinn had simply chosen him because he was the first one he had found wandering around the ward boundary.

While the ward boundary stopped various magic, it didn't prevent mind magic from going through. And mind magic was one of Quinn's most dangerous weapons, and the moment he laid his eyes on Gerald, his mind was already in Quinn's hands. He shoved everything aside and targetted Gerald's most joyous and tragic memories, and to his surprise, he found something that hit both of those categories.

Trent— Gerald's late son. Little Trent had died at the tender age of five from a magical illness that had spurred quick and hard. The child's immune system and magic weren't able to sustain him until magical medicine could work its charm. . . and Trent had departed to his next great adventure.

The moment Quinn had found that button, he clicked it hard. He had weaved together his best work of mind and illusion magic to show Gerald a magical image of Trent that acted in the same way Trent had done in the memories with slight actions that would push the already emotional and distraught Gerald over the edge so that the mind magic could dominate the mind and Quinn could puppet him in any way he desired. 'Should I go back to check?' he wondered. There was a real chance that Gerald could panic and come back to check on Trent to see if his son was still there.

The wall in front shook, and a glowing outline appeared on the wall in the shape of a door. Quinn pushed himself off the opposite wall and

walked towards the glow as the part of the wall changed into a stark red door with golden trim. Just like the Labyrinth doors could be hidden, the exit points could also be hidden and didn't have to be visible all the time. The door was thrown open and Gerald burst out looking panicked. He turned his eyes over Quinn, and for a split moment, his eyes didn't even linger, but then he double-taked hard.

"I-Invisible Vigilante!" Gerald's body froze up from his feet, a paralysis traveling up his body. His eyes trembled as Quinn walked toward him.

"No! Don't come near me! Stay away!"

Quinn raised his hand towards Gerald, but before he could even touch him, the spiraling Death Eater fainted. "Oh. . . well," Quinn touched Gerald's forehead and made sure that the man stayed in his current state. He then jammed the door to make it stay open so that he would have a way to enter and exit Hogsmeade at will without needing Gerald's help anymore.

He gave Gerald one final look before entering the house and saw what Gerald had done to find the door. The man had turned the house upside down, not a single thing in the room was in the correct place, and Quinn crushed broken glass pieces the moment he stepped inside the house.

"People can be so brutal and. . . uncivilized," he sighed. Quinn moved across the house and found a window. He peered out and scowled at the empty streets of Hogsmeade, and that too at morning— something you could only see on a big Quidditch game day, but today the reason was deeply sinister.

He had gotten in Hogsmeade, but the question now was what to do now that he was here. He couldn't charge in and start cutting down Death Eaters left and right; he couldn't even go hunting in shadows— not when there were innocent people in constant danger of a wipeout. Go after

Voldemort? Now was not the time; there were things to do be taken before taking a stand against Voldemort.

'I should scout the village to get a better feel for the situation,' thought Quinn. As it stood currently, Voldemort was a secondary concern; the primary priority was the people taken as hostages— their safety was needed to be assured before anything. 'Not only are they too big of a number to be sacrificed,' Quinn couldn't lie and say he hadn't thought of collateral damage; alas, an entire village was a bit too large to be sacrificed and— 'Dumbledore won't fight without restraint if he knew that there was a chance to wipe out more than a hundred people. . . ' That's why he needed to clear the village of innocents. . . well, not him— he had people who would do that for him.

He had other motives in mind. . . .

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Hermione silently opened the door and hurriedly sneaked in before closing the door behind her. She breathed a sigh of relief and pulled down the Cloak of Invisibility from her body. Hermione looked at the room she had seen merely a couple of times in her seven years at Hogwarts. It was a layout much like her own Head Girl's Suite but bigger than the new residency that she had taken over this year.

"Hermione, is that you?" came a voice from inside.

"Yes, Professor Potter," replied Hermione as she walked to the voice and reached Lily, who was standing inside the kitchen of the Professors' Quarters that had been assigned to her when she took her position in Hogwarts. "Where are Ivy and the boys?" she asked.

"They're inside," Lily sighed and presented Hermione with a tray of

refreshments. "Make them eat something, will you, dear. It's no use worrying about the things they're spinning their heads around."

"Yes, I will see to it," Hermione took the tray carefully.

Lily smiled, "How lucky is my Harry to have you." Hermione tinted red and looked away in embarrassment. "I'm going out to a Professors meeting; make yourself comfortable," said Lily, flicking her wand that set the kitchen utensils and cleaners into motion.

Hermione saw Lily off before heading into the living room and found her best friends sitting silently as if someone had passed away. "I brought food," she opened up. "You three should eat something; you had nothing at lunch." She placed the tray on the center table and sat beside Ivy, but none reached out for food, not even Ron. "Why are you three like this? Harry, you're not going to be given to Voldemort! Why are you needlessly thinking about that?"

"What else is there to think about?" Harry replied; there was a hint of furrow between his brows. "I know Dumbledore won't send me out even know matter what anyone says, and with him here, neither can I be forced out. . . but what if it's the only way?"

"What?" Hermione uttered with hurt in her voice. Ivy and Ron looked shocked, the former much more than the latter.

"There are so many trapped in Hogsmeade, and we have more here at Hogwarts. . . what if me going to Voldemort puts so many lives safely out of danger. . . one in exchange for many seems logical, doesn't it," Harry said bitterly. "When the safety is ensured, Dumbledore can defeat Voldemort and—"

"Are you listening to yourself?!" Hermione stood up with clenched fists and stared with. "Voldemort won't die with the Horcruxes still around!"

"I know that, but Dumbledore kills Voldemort now; it will give everyone

some time," Harry rebuked, looking Hermione straight in the eye and ignoring the increasingly darkening expressions. "The Diary and the Ring. . . two of the Horcruxes are already destroyed. If we take one that Quinn has, that'll make three. . . and if with me, it'll make four. . ."

There was a horrid silence in the room, but one look at three other than Harry would reveal that they had much to yell, and if not for the shock of the situation, they would've torn the roof off.

". . . That's already more than half. In the time it takes Voldemort to recover, the rest of the Horcruxes could be found, and with his fall, the Death Eaters could truly be rounded up and put into Azkaban. . . not before we send them to Quinn to have them fixed."

"Shut up," Hermione glared at Harry.

"I agree with her," Ivy said. "You need to stop speaking right now. The more you speak, the worse you make things. You know what, shut down your brain and just stare at a wall or something, you idiot."

"Mate, thinking like that isn't going to help anyone," said Ron. "Even if you ask to be sent out, no one's going to let you. I'll be the first to stun your arse and lock you in the dungeons. . . so why even think of the pointless."

Harry looked up at Hermione, who looked more hurt than he had ever seen her. When Harry didn't say anything, Hermione stomped out of the room.

"Go after her, you idiot," said Ron.

Harry stood up and walked out to follow his girlfriend out of the room.

Ivy looked at Ron and asked, "Hermione was wrong; you don't have the emotional intelligence of a teaspoon, Ron."

Ron shifted to face Ivy, and instead of saying something she would expect him to say, he asked, "What is Quinn doing now?"

"Err. . . what?"

"Even I won't believe it if you told me that you haven't talked to him.

What is the Invisible Vigilante doing now?"

Ivy studied Ron for a good long moment before asking, "Why are you asking?"

"Because it concerns my best friend. I don't know if he has told anyone where the Horcrux he has is. From what I've read about him in the papers and heard from you, he's surely trying to get involved. And if he's coming here, he might get caught and die. So, I want to know where the Horcrux is, so we can destroy. . . I will do it if that's what's needed"— Ron squinted his eyes— "You didn't think of that, did you," he sighed.

Ivy's face had turned the moment Ron mentioned the possibility of Quinn dying. "I-I. . ." she couldn't say anything.

"I know it's not an easy conversation, but ask him where it is. If he has put it somewhere, ask him how to get to it. If he's keeping it with him, tell him to hide it somewhere and ask him. Even if you don't think it's not going to happen. . . right now, right here, anything can happen," Ron got up and walked out of the room, leaving Ivy alone in the room.

She looked toward the door and gingerly pulled out the shrunken two-way mirror. She tapped it with her wand, and it began to flash. . . but the connection was never accepted by the other side.

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Quinn West - MC - Much things to do; no time to do them in.

Ivy Potter - Tough Position - W-Why isn't he picking up.

Harry Potter - Horcrux - I have to die one way or another. . .

FictionOnlyReader - Author - The thing with Gerald and Trent, I took from Rick & Morty— the car battery episode where Summer is protected by the car.

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413. Chapter 413: Getting In

Again

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Link in the Bio/Profile

The mirror in Quinn's pocket flashed and vibrated, but his hands didn't go to it, despite knowing where and whom the call was coming from. His eyes were stuck on the surreal sight in front of him.

On a street junction, three wooden pillars stood erected, and tied up from them were three bodies with their heads bowed and arms nailed on horizontal wooden planks. They had been stripped of their clothes, leaving them with no dignity even in death. There were dried blood stains on the ground, seemingly having dripped down from their bodies.

Quinn stepped out from the shadows and moved closer and saw the discolored skin color which had turned a grotesque black. . . he knew what that was a sign of. . . someone had overloaded their bodies with Crucio for an excessive amount of time. If they were alive, their skin would've recovered with time, but in death, it would stay this way until their bodies decomposed, returning to earth.

He didn't know who these men were or why they ended up like this, but he was sure they didn't deserve this fate and ending. Quinn clenched his

fist and looked with self-disgust because he knew he couldn't get the dead bodies down from the pillars as doing so would alert the Death Eaters of an outside presence.

'Too late, huh,' Quinn squeezed his shut for a moment before disappearing into the wind.

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"Albus, we have to do something," McGonagall impatiently entered the Headmaster's Office and began pacing around under Dumbledore's eyes.

"The older students are gathering in the Great Hall, and I fear they will demand that the Potter family be given to the Dark Lord. We must stop it at once! We already have enough problems outside; I'm not equipped to handle them arising inside."

The younger students weren't old enough to completely comprehend the situation and believed Dumbledore's words of everything being alright.

But the senior students had the capability to think for themselves, and at that age, it was an instinct to question and sometimes oppose the decision. Right now, those instincts were rearing their heads.

"If they ask for it," said Dumbledore, "I will face them, listen to their reasoning, talk to them— but I'm not going to shut them down without giving them a chance to speak their minds."

"What if they don't listen?"

"They will. . . they have to. What reason do they have other than Voldemort's word, which frankly saying isn't much. They haven't lived through wars, faced Dark Lords, or know what goes in their twisted minds— they haven't seen the dark side, the real side of things. . . and as long as they're in my care, it's my duty to protect them from it."

Dumbledore stood up from his chair and headed to the window. He stared out at the scenery with his hands behind his back; he could barely make out Hogsmeade in the distance because of the ward distorting the view. "Minerva. . . I would like to take care of Hogwarts in case something happens to me. I have already named you my successor. . . take care of the children," he said.

McGonagall froze in her tracks and jerkily turned to Dumbledore. "Albus, what are you. . ."

"I've already passed a hundred a decade ago—"

"That doesn't mean anything," interjected McGonagall; she didn't want this conversation to continue. "You're not old, Albus, if that's what you're trying to imply— you're not a Muggle." The magical kind had longer lifespans; for them, a hundred years wasn't the sunset of life.

". . . No, I'm not old; this isn't about that," Dumbledore still didn't turn towards her. "Frankly speaking, I was in my prime when I fought Grindelwald. I was young, passionate, and had the hunger suitable for that time— I was even learning under Nicholas back then. When the war ended and the peace arrived, I let my hair down and returned to teaching at Hogwarts. . . my efforts at magic took a step back. When I became the Headmaster, my duties increased, same with my other titles. . . another step back for magic. By the time Tom Riddle rose as Voldemort, I hadn't been as active with magic as I was when I fought Grindelwald. . . I had become complacent. When Voldemort started to show as a threat, I dusted the cobwebs over my magic— even those efforts constantly clashed with my role at Wizengamot. . . but I trusted them to be enough," Dumbledore took out the Elder wand to gaze at it. "When Voldemort was vanquished, I thought I would double-down my efforts; however, leading the Light faction was a burden too time-consuming— and I had to figure

out a way to defeat Voldemort once and for all. . ."

He turned to McGonagall and surprised her with a bitter smile. "I fear I'm not strong enough to come out alive from a life-and-death duel with Voldemort. He has always been hungry for power. The time he had spent suffering after Harry vanquished him has only strengthened that desire. He has utilized unspeakable dark rituals to bolster his power, learned the vilest of magic— he is mighty. . ."

The last words were already said before, and McGonagall could tell that Dumbledore chose not to tell them.

"You have to be alive," said McGonagall. "There can't be any other outcome. Hogwarts needs you, the children need you. . . Hogwarts won't be the same without you. You need to stay alive to see a time where you can retreat away from everything and just be the Headmaster and actually get to teach."

The light returned to Dumbledore's eyes as he chuckled. "Maybe you are right. I would love to teach again."

"You looked like you enjoyed it when you did it that year."

"Working with young children, introducing them to new things is the finest experience I have had in my life," Dumbledore smiled as he sighed.

"I hope I will get to experience it again. . . I really hope so."

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"Sir, we are ready to move in."

Sirius strapped his standard-issue Auror dragonhide heavy vest as he turned to his subordinate. "Good, tell everyone to strap up and take their position; we move in three."

"Yes, sir," the Junior Auror saluted before running away.

Sirius turned towards and walked towards a group dressed differently. All were dressed in matching tan combat gear, which, different from the Auror issue, was made from a select breed of dragons with a lighter and more magic-resistant hide. Every last one seemed in tip-top shape with a body language that spoke of their training.

"Warlunt," called Sirius.

Warlunt, his Hit Wizard counterpart, turned, and for a moment, Sirius thought how if Warlunt wasn't married, he would've been the perfect wingman. He was handsome in the rugged way that many ladies dug, and combined with his job as Hit Wizard, the man was a chick magnet.

"Ready?" said Warlunt.

"The wardbreakers are ready to break the ward at command," said Sirius, returning his focus to the job. "Are you going to lead the vanguard or rearguard?" There were three ground teams and one air unit. Out of the three ground teams, two were made up of Hit Wizards, and they were going to assume the role of the vanguard, and the second Hit Wizard team went from the backside of the resort. Sirius was going to lead the rearguard team of Aurors from the front. The second team of Aurors was going to take the sky on brooms and were going to proceed to enter from the sky and attack from above if needed.

"I'm leading the charge," said Warlunt, as if it was obvious.

"Good man," praised Sirius with respect before speaking with a severe tone. "Be careful; the target is a heavy-handed butcher. He will not hesitate to cut off limbs or blast off pieces of bodies. It's a rarity we get his victims in stable condition. Don't hold back; I have already told my men to cast to kill. I don't mind capturing him alive, but even for a moment, you find yourself in a shred of doubt that things could go awry, kill the bastard. . . . If you're hesitant to do so, go look at the kid's dead

body at the entrance."

Warlunt shook his head. "I don't mind it. If you want him dead, I will deliver him to you dead."

"Not if I get to him first."

"We will see about that, little man," the towering Hit Wizard smirked.

Sirius clicked his tongue and shoved Warlunt, who laughed in return.

After the five minutes passed, Sirius faced everyone who had been assembled for the current mission. Aurors, Hit Wizards, Medi-Healers for emergencies, external consultant wardbreakers. . . everyone was looking at him. "I don't have much to say, and neither am I interested in saying much, so I'll keep it short," he said. "Our peers stationed outside Hogwarts with Death Eaters and the Dark Lord holding the entire village hostages while our children are only separated by a ward. While here we are, facing a man whom I respected before he killed a child— now he's a worthless bastard that needs to go. I would rather be at Hogsmeade than here, making sure that the people I work with and care for are safer with me there, protecting their backs, and ensuring the children are not harmed."

Sirius got a murmur of agreement. He continued, "And make no mistakes, I'm going to be there. For that to happen, we need to sort out this mess. So, let's get in there, save the people, and put the bastard into his place. I don't want a single injury because I want all bodies at Hogsmeade after this. This is a detour to the main event, and you should treat this as a warm-up. . . . That's it, everyone gets into positions."

There was a wave of cheer for everyone to psych themselves up.

Everyone had already been instructed on how to proceed and had been familiarized with the layout of the building.

The wardbreakers positioned themselves on either side of the door,

behind the walls, so they couldn't be attacked while dismantling the ward. Warlunt and his team took the frontal position with Sirius' team behind. The air team rose up on their brooms, and the third ground team moved the backside to enter from there.

"Wards coming down in ten," announced one of the wardbreakers, and the countdown began. The ward started to flicker, and within ten seconds, the ward broke down. Sirius shot a detection spell, and the moment it cleared up, a Hit Wizard moved in and pulled the dead body out.

"Move in," Warlunt ordered, and everyone on the scene proceeded as instructed. Warlunt crossed the tunnel but dipped back in just in time to escape a green Killing Curse passing him by. "He's on the left. Cover for me."

The Hit Wizard behind Warlunt charmed outside the tunnel, and it rose to create a wall. Warlunt moved behind the wall, and the moment he felt an impact on the wall, he ducked out and was about to shoot a spell but immediately entered into protection again.

"What is it?" asked Sirius.

"That was not the Invisible Vigilante," said Warlunt, frowning.

"What?"

"A resort staff shot a Killing Curse at me."

"What?! Why?"

"How would I know—" Warlunt's eyes widened, and he groaned hard before saying, "they're under Imperius. God damn it! That fucker put the staff under Imperius! We aren't facing a single person anymore!"

"You mean," Sirius wrinkled his nose.

"Yeah. . . lethal force is now out of use."

Things had just gotten a lot more complicated.

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Quinn West - MC - Gotta be sneaky.

Albus Dumbledore - Headmaster - I would love to teach and learn again.

Sirius Black - Senior Auror - The day keeps getting worse.

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414. Chapter 414: Vigilantes

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Link in the Bio/Profile

The break-in team at the resort stood in the front entrance tunnel. The Hit Wizards stepped back when a spell grazed the earthen wall and blew a small chunk out of it, sending dust into the tunnel.

"This is so troublesome," sighed Warlunt. "I didn't understand it before, but now I understand why this guy has gotten so much onto your nerve.

How should we proceed with this."

Sirius stared at the spells that passed by, and they were indeed a complication that he hadn't thought he would see here. He had read about the materials prepared about the Invisible Vigilante in detail—everything from the choice of victims, the frequency and timing of appearance, his magic, his attire, to what little interaction people had with him. Not once in that profile did Invisible Vigilante work with others, especially not controlling people to do his bidding. But now, they

could potentially be facing an entire resort of people, all ordered to attack them.

"How much of a problem is this for you," he asked.

Warlunt nonchalantly shrugged, with his team showing similar expressions. "They're civilians. . . not really an inconvenience. Yes, we will have to be a little careful about who we shoot at, but we are going to be in any danger. The only problem that may arise is that while we are being careful with our spell, the possibility of Invisibility Vigilante jumping in, and we might not nail him with the first spell." He looked to his team provocatively and smirked, "I won't be making that mistake, though. . . don't know about you guys."

"We will clear it all out before you even get to see any actions," scoffed one of the Hit Wizards.

Sirius clapped his hands and got everyone's attention. He didn't want this to turn into a muscle-brained competition. "Whatever you do, I don't want any hostage casualties. A little scuffling is fine, but nothing that will come biting us in the back in tomorrow's newspaper." He turned to one of his Juniors, "Have you informed the other teams?" He got a nod in return. "Good, then let's move in."

Warlunt stepped behind the earthen wall that had been taking damage for a minute now but still hadn't crumbled due to the difference in skill between an untrained civilian and a masterful Hit Wizard. He took one breath before stepping out of the wall and calmly registered the attacker as a resort employee. He blocked a spell before drilling a red hot stunner into the Imperiused person.

His team moved past him and stationed themselves on both sides of a hallway entrance. Warlunt walked into the hallway with his subordinates, ready to give cover; he stopped at the head of the hallway

and spotted four people— two guests and employees each— and with a single flick, a wave of magic radiated out, and the four people settled for the floor as their beds.

"Clear," he stated. "Split out, be in pairs. Marcon with me."

The Aurors and Hit Wizards spit up and start covering ground around the scenic and high-end resort. Very quickly, the Imperiused people began dropping by the coordinated and quick effort of trained professionals, and everything was going very well with excellent efficiency until the teams found the Invisible Vigilante.

Warlunt silently unlocked the door to the laundry room of the resort. He gave the signal to his pair, and both of them shuffled into the damp room with clothes being washed with magic.

"No one's here," said the Junior Hit Wizard with Warlunt as he cast a revealing spell in the room.

Warlunt pointed to a narrow sheet metal door in the room's back wall.

The Junior pointed his wand at the door and was about to unlock it when the door burst open, and a black-clad masked figure burst out with a wand blaring. . . only to be hit by two Killing Curse in the chest.

"Well. . . that's that," Warlunt disarmed the dead body and cast binding spells just to be extra sure after two Killing Curses. The Invisible Vigilante was said to be unpredictable, and he had enough magic to spare.

"Let's unmask him; I want to see how he looks," said the Junior.

"Go for it," Warlunt also wanted to see.

The Junior walked to the body and flipped it on its back. He gave Warlunt one glance before snatching the mask off. ". . . What?" he sputtered in shock. "A woman?" Behind the mask wasn't a man as they expected; instead, they found themselves staring at a young woman with freckles that stared at them with half-open dead amber eyes. "Sir, I-I

thought the Invisible Vigilante was supposed to be a man."

"I thought so myself; everyone did," Warlunt frowned with his arms crossed. "But it seems it was a woman all along. With that voice modulation, clothes that covered the entire body, the pronoun usage, and the behavior. . . everything directed towards it being a man rather than a woman." He sighed, "Let's bag her up and take her to the front; we can declare this Op over and head to Hogsmeade."

"Yes, sir," Junior took out a black patch and let it go; by the time it reached the ground, the patch had turned into a full-size body bag. They navigated their way out by following the same path they had taken, pulling along all the unconscious people they had stunned. When they got near to the front, they heard a commotion. "It looks like everyone has returned," Warlunt smirked. "Let's go rub it in Black's face."

However, when they reached the resort entrance, they were stunned to see half a dozen more standard-issue body bags placed in a line.

Warlunt's heart skipped a beat; his eyes shifted all around the place, counting the Aurors and Hit Wizard that had entered the resort. . . and no one was missing.

"Black," called Warlunt, with a bad bubbling inside him, "what is this? I don't see anyone missing."

Sirius rubbed his face with his hand. "You got a body bag with you, which means you took out the Invisible Vigilante, didn't you?" he sighed.

"Yeah, surprisingly, it was a woman."

"Yeah, that isn't the Invisible Vigilante," Sirius pointed at Warlunt's body bag and then the six others, "and neither are these guys."

". . . What?"

"We woke one of the resort employees and asked him to identify the people we shot down," Sirius pinched between his brows. "We ended up

killing resort employees and guests."

The air was knocked out of Warlunt's lungs. He turned to the body bag behind him, which he carried the young woman's body. "Y-You mean. . ."

"We think that the real Invisible Vigilante escaped right after we saw him and left behind the Imperiused people— some of them were dressed in the Invisible Vigilante's outfit," Sirius groaned and seemed sick by the time he finished.

Warlunt himself had paled when he realized that he had killed an innocent person. He turned when he heard a despairing voice. ". . . W-What I have done?" The Junior Auror with him was staring at the body bag with a horrified look on his face. 'Ah, that's going to be a long time with a mind-healer,' he thought. 'Same for me,' and the thought of how awful it would be.

"We have to report this," said Sirius. "Scrimgeour is not going to like this at all."

"He won't. . . but his dislike for the Invisible Vigilante is stronger. I think we can get by and still get to be part of the Hogsmeade Op. With that scale, they will have to call us no matter how this turned out."

"But do you think it is wise to let these men participate at Hogsmeade," Sirius turned to look at the man; many of them had dark expressions on their faces. "All of them are physically fit, plenty of magic in their tanks. . . but their mental state, I'm worried about," Sirius' own face was paler than usual. "I don't know if it will be wise to send them to Hogsmeade. After all, it won't be as easy as this; there will be real Death Eaters— if they're not careful, they will be wiped out."

Warlunt scrunched up his nose in displeasure. Sirius had a point; as much as he wanted his trusted men beside him on the field, he couldn't put them at risk. "They won't like to be excluded from the Hogsmeade Op. . .

so how about we put them in the command center. . . this way, they would be safe and won't feel like they're being excluded," he suggested.

". . . That seems to be the best option."

Warlunt and Sirius looked at their team members, who were proceeding with their work but at such a sluggish pace that, if not for the current circumstance, they would've been chewed out thrice over.

"I hate the Invisible Vigilante," said Sirius.

"If I see the real one, I'll use Cruciatus instead of the Killing Curse," responded Warlunt with an edge. He sighed, "Let's go for a drink when all this is over— with the teams, all of us."

Sirius hummed in agreement before asking, "Why do you think he did this? Even if we blame him, we still need to figure out the reasoning behind this? This doesn't match with his profile. Why aggravate us? Why use us?" The Invisible Vigilante never had a problem with doing the job himself, but today, he had done something so out of character.

"Maybe he didn't want to dirty his hands with children's blood and used us to do the job. As for the one he killed, that kid wasn't a saint even if he didn't have a record."

"Then why put employees in his attire? They weren't related to Death Eaters, we checked. Why put innocent people to death. I just can't make sense of the situation."

"To be honest with you," Warlunt pursed his lips into a line, "I don't care right now. I want to go to Hogsmeade and take care of that first. I'll volunteer my time to hunt his arse down."

"I'm already on the task force," said Sirius, "leading it, currently."

The rest of the affair was quiet as the body bags were secured and sent to the morgue while the unconscious people were woken up and sent to St. Mungos to recover from exposure to Imperius Curse. They sealed off the

resort after a thorough check, and the scenery was vacated, leaving behind a couple of Junior Aurors who had never entered the scene. In the distant sky, they didn't notice a black-clad masked figure on a broom that observed them for the entire time they were there.

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Quinn frowned as he looked down at the town center. There was a building that could fit all the people inside, and right now, the town hall was being used as the hostage holding center. He could see it from the roof upon which he was that it was heavily guarded by Death Eaters. It wouldn't have been a problem if that was it, but he knew from sneaking into the mind of one of the Death Eaters just out of guard rotation that the Dark Lord was inside with the hostages.

He bit his lip. He couldn't do anything about it for that reason. He decided not to take any action, leaving it to the people whose job it was to rescue people. Instead, he began looking for his first genuine target of the day.

"Serpensortia," he whispered for a pit of snakes to emit out of his hand.

He stared at snakes of different shapes and sizes, and after a moment, they slithered away.

The bait had been set.

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Quinn West - MC - Screentime, please.

Sirius Black - Senior Auror - Not having a good time.

Warlunt - Senior Hit Wizard - Push it aside and move on.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Mid-terms next week, time to grind. See you guys in a bit.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

415. Chapter 415: They Have A

Deal

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile.

"That's pretty much it, I guess," Quinn muttered silently. He held a small black puck in one hand as the other hand's fingers weaved magic into the small magical machine that he had created on the spot from an emergency supply of things in his pockets. He kept an eye on the streets below him, nothing everything from the cover of the shadows.

The surveillance was completed.

He pressed the puck's top for patterns to appear on the black surface, shimmering in an esoteric light before dissipating in the afternoon light.

The small puck was now functional. Quinn didn't put it away immediately; instead, he covered the puck in both palms and flushed it with an intense burst of magic.

A white smoke escaped from between his hands. 'No way, I'm going to leave my magical signature behind a second time,' he thought as he pocketed the now complete puck.

It was time to leave Hogsmeade for a while to prepare for the next phase of the day. He stood up from the crouching position and was about to

walk when he felt a buzz coming from one of his breast pockets. He took out a pocket mirror, and it was the one Ivy had made for him. He gazed around, scouring the street for eyes before slipping into a shop nearest to him.

"Hey, is something wrong?" Quinn asked a worried Ivy.

"Why haven't you been picking up?!" Ivy all but screeched at him. Quinn could feel the panic and anxiety in her voice; it was like an overflowing dam. "I have been trying to reach you for-for— forever! I thought Voldemort got you, that you were. . . that you," she hiccuped, "d-died. . . Why haven't you been picking up my calls, you idiot?!"

"Ivy, listen to me. . . I want you to take deep breaths," he said. "Calm yourself down. Short bursts of Occlumency to just vain off all that fright. . . and deep breaths. . . yes, like that, very good." Quinn pulled a chair inside the shop, and even though it wasn't the time and place, he sat down to listen. "Unfortunately, it is as you thought; I'm inside Hogsmeade right now—"

"Get out of there!"

"— Fortunately, I've excellent stealth skills and am extremely well hidden," said Quinn. "And please don't worry, I am about to leave Hogsmeade— I already did what I came here to do; now it's time to let the authorities do their job," he smiled.

"You promise?" she asked him with an urge that was asking for him to agree.

"I promise," he smiled. "So, why were you trying to reach me? Did something happen?"

Ivy slumped into the sofa she was sitting on, and her beautiful green eyes darkened. "We were eating lunch when Voldemort's voice filled the Great Hall. He said that he will let everyone else go as long as he gets me,

mom, and Harry," Ivy's breath quickened as she got up and began pacing around, sending the mirror out of focus.

Quinn sat up straight the moment he heard the words. "No one in their right minds will believe that, would they?" But as the words left his mouth, he knew what pressure and danger could do to the human mind and its decision-making capabilities.

"Everyone's whispering," Ivy was barely in the frame, with the image shifting all around the room. "Hermione went out sneaking under the cloak, and she heard everyone talking about it everywhere— no one was outright saying it, but they were all pointing to it. But now, sixth and seventh years are filling the Great Hall, and I think they will ask Dumbledore. . . to-to," she took deep breaths; she sat down, and Quinn could finally properly see her again.

"It's okay; nothing of what you think is going to happen," he tried to calm her down. "Dumbledore's not going to let anyone harm you guys. I know right now is difficult, but please don't let your thoughts go in that direction. I'm going to go meet the Aurors and give them what I've found — they will contact Dumbledore, and with the combined effort, this will get sorted by tomorrow. Everything's going to turn up, believe me."

Ivy wiped the tears that trickled down her face and rubbed her eyes as she nodded. She stared at Quinn through the mirror, and her face took on a rigid expression as if bracing herself.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I need you to tell me where is the Hufflepuff's Cup."

Quinn blinked in confusion before his brows furrowed, and he asked, frowning. "What brought this on, if I may ask?"

"You're the Invisible Vigilante; you're always in danger. Even now, you're inside Hogsmeade all alone with the Death Eaters and Voldemort. And

you're the only one who knows where the Horcrux is. I need to know where it is in case something. . ."

"In case something happens to me," Quinn nodded.

"Quinn, I'm sorry—"

"No, no, you have a point. Me being the only one to know the location is a problem," it was a legitimate point he hadn't thought of yet; even his Will that was automatically supposed to go via MagiFax to multiple sources upon his death didn't mention the Horcrux's location. "I have the Horcrux on my person— it always is— but don't worry, I'll drop it in a secure location as soon as I leave here. It'll be here. . ." He told Ivy the location of one of his secret stashes that held an emergency inventory in case he required supplies.

"Thank you," Ivy rested her forehead on her palm and kept repeating the same.

After the call ended, Quinn didn't immediately leave the shop. He sat in the darkness of the shop and stared outside at the bright street. The plan was supposed to be to get out of Hogsmeade, drop off the intel to the Aurors, and then wait for the fighting to begin to jump back in and end all of it once and for all.

But with what he just heard, plans had to be changed.

"This is hard," he spat.

He pocketed Ivy's mirror and took out Daphne's mirror instead. He held the mirror for a minute, contemplating if he should proceed with it because if he did it, the price might be a little too much for him.

He closed his eyes and injected magic into the mirror. It flashed in silver light, and with each flash, Quinn thought if he should cut the transmission and forget about it.

"Quinn?" Daphne picked up the call.

He silently took a breath before saying, "I want you to do something for me."

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"I heard you want the Potters."

Voldemort, who had been thinking and working on breaking the Hogwarts defenses, opened his eyes when he heard the voice whispered into his ear. He didn't even look around the room and exited the room he was in because he could feel the traces of magic laced in the sound. The speaker wasn't in his room.

"How about we make a deal, you and I," repeated the voice.

Voldemort walked through the town hall, ignoring his Death Eaters and the pathetic whimpers of the hostages. His eyes narrowed to the wall, and he raised his hand for a small spider to fly from the wall into his palm. He raised his palm closer to his face, and upon a closer look, the spider wasn't a normal one. 'A puppet?' he thought, looking at the spider made from various materials like metal, wood, and rubber. He channeled magic into the spider and came across the enchantments laid into it.

"I can get you Boy-Who-Lived," Voldemort heard again. "But just him, not the mother and daughter."

Voldemort didn't respond. He observed the magic in the puppet spider, which was the source of the sound he was hearing. He looked around the town hall and noticed six more spiders in the large hall. The sound and magic were being bounced off between the seven spiders, with the voice transmission switching between the seven spiders quickly.

'Why?' Voldemort contemplated. 'Why such complexity?'

He dug deeper into the magic and sensed that the seven spiders were

getting the signals from outside. He moved outside with one of the spiders in hand and, with his magic, noticed that the signal was again coming from multiple sources, all around the village, and again was being bounced around the village.

'Ah. . . it is so that I won't find where the voice is coming from.'

Voldemort's feet left the ground, and he rose up into the sky and flew up high enough to look at the entire village. 'I can't tell where it is coming from,' his guess was correct— the sender was trying to hide from him. He could find it, but it would take time. . .

Voldemort placed the puppet spider on his shoulder and spoke, "I am listening. . ."

The reply came after a couple seconds. "I can get you the Boy-Who-Lived, but only him. In turn, you let go of the hostages— half now and half after the job is done."

"Why would I believe anything you say? What if this is just a ploy to trick me into letting go of half of my leverage? Why should I trust someone I don't know," Voldemort looked around the message, actively trying to locate the speaker. "Someone who can't even show the basic etiquette by standing before me while talking."

"You can believe me because I can get you face to face with Harry Potter with Dumbledore interfering it."

"That seems unlikely." He could've done it by now if it was possible.

"I can turn that unlikely to very likely."

"Oh," Voldemort tried to stretch the conversation to see if he could even locate the general area, "and who do you think you are to think that you can steal Harry Potter from under Dumbledore's eyes."

"I'm the Invisible Vigilante."

Voldemort stopped searching and fixed his gaze on a distance,

concentrating more on his hearing than his sight. The Invisible Vigilante. . . if someone asked him who had been his worst obstacle since his recent return, then he would undoubtedly point to the Invisible Vigilante— the unknown man had foiled several of his plan that would've been crucial in taking over the country.

"Why would you, of all people, help me?" asked Voldemort.

"I despise you and everything related to you. If I could, I would've already killed you. Right now, you have all of Hogsmeade with you— and if I can deliver one for the safety of many, it's only logical. I provide you with Harry Potter, and you let go of the hostages. . . as straightforward as it can get."

Voldemort didn't reply instantly. He let the offer rest in his head, tumbling in his thought and reasoning, his mind measuring the words on the balancing scale of pros and cons, trying to see if this offer was enticing enough to let go of his leverages.

"Agreed," said the Dark Lord. The prophecy had been about him and Harry Potter and foretold the danger to his life. He had already lost his body and was forced to roam the plane for a long, painful time. He wasn't going to have a repeat of it— he preferred to have the threat of prophecy removed from his head. "I shall let half go now and half when I have Harry Potter in my grasp. But beware, Invisible Vigilante, cross me, and the lives of these people will be on your bloodstained hands." If he was betrayed, the ground would be irrigated with the blood of its residents.

"Let half of them go," came the voice. "I will contact you when I'm ready to make the exchange— I'll tell you the place."

Voldemort wanted to issue a deadline, but before he could say anything, the puppet spider jumped off his shoulder and went free-falling down to the ground. It was clear that the negotiations were over. If it was any

other time, he would've not accepted such insolence and smited the other party— but the price was tantalizing this time. This could be the first step he had been lacking, the first step to his eternal glory.

He flew down the town hall, and the moment he stepped across the door, he was approached by Rookwood, and before the ex-Unspeakable could get in a word, Voldemort spoke,

"Separate the woman and children from the men, and let the men go."

"Go?"

"Yes, let them go. I'll open the ward."

He snapped his finger, and the puppet spiders in the town hall sparked into fumes.

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Quinn West - Invisible Vigilante - I mean, I have to continue it. . .

Ivy Potter - On a roller coaster - Unfortunately, she won't find the Horcrux there.

Voldemort - Dark Lord - Time to kill the prophecy with green

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

416. Chapter 416: Providing Information

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

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Link in the Bio/Profile

Inside the command centre on ground zero outside Hogsmeade, the higher-ups of DMLE gathered around a table with a holographic three-dimensional representation of Hogsmeade floating in the centre.

"What is the progress on the Unspeakable side?" asked Scrimgeour, who had arrived just for this meeting.

"Some progress has been made on the ward," answered Kingsley. "I've been told that they can get us inside by tomorrow or the day after that, but that's about it. . . there hasn't been any progress on disabling the Floo or the spatial component of the ward. Even if the Unspeakables get us inside, the ward will stand with all its other functionality. . ."

Scrimgeour's face twisted before he said, "Which means there's no way to evacuate the people inside Hogwarts," he clicked his tongue. He looked to Robards, "Put pressure on the Unspeakables; I wanted us in there yesterday. Have we been able to an estimate of Death Eaters are inside?"

Kingsley answered the question, "From the sky scouting squad, we have spotted a number somewhere between two hundred fifty to three hundred Death Eaters."

". . . That's more than I thought," Scrimgeour scowled. "Even with all the clean-up we— and he," there was venom in his voice, "caught so many of them?" If the estimate was correct, every Auror and Hit Wizard would have to face at least two Death Eaters. . . which wasn't bad, given the training that they had, but he still didn't great about the numbers.

"The intelligence thinks that the Novellus Accionites who were punished a few years ago have been recruited into Death Eaters. They have been supplied with wands," which the charged Novellus Accionites were banned from wielding. Kingsley provided before asking Scrimgeour, "What of the Invisible Vigilante crew, sir? Will they be joining us? We could use the men."

"Sirius and Warlunt will be joining you, but the Juniors won't be," Scrimgeour didn't trust the Juniors who had ended up accidentally killing innocents to hold themselves in stressful situations, and he had refused the request to switch them out with the Juniors who were operating in the headquarters. Thus— "You will only be getting those two. I've started to send out calls to the retired members for reserve forces."

A Junior Auror pushed aside the tent flap and skidded into the tent, pushing aside the gravel on the ground. Her words died in her throat when she saw some very prominent pairs of eyes on her, but then she seemed to recall why she had barged into the command room so rudely. "R-Reporting, sirs! A large number of men are heading towards us from inside Hogsmeade!" she exclaimed.

Everyone inside the tent stood up. "Death Eaters?" asked Robards.

"No sir," said the Junior Auror; she sounded confused, "the men are Hogsmeade residents! A few Death Eaters are accompanying them."

Robards turned to Kingsley and ordered, "Gather everyone; I want us to be ready for any scenario." He turned to Scrimgeour, "Leave immediately."

"I want to see what is this," said Scrimgeour.

"You are leaving right now. Don't argue with me, sir. We will call you for combat if we need you. I can't take the risk of the Head of DMLE dying on my watch. Now, go!" The Aurors moved out, leaving Scrimgeour inside alone.

Outside, the Aurors and DMLE stood outside the ward, ready for the worst. Slowly, people trickled into the empty streets inside the ward as a large group of men made their way to the ward boundary.

"Stop!" announced Kingsley with his wand on his throat.

The Hogsmeade men didn't stop, nor did the Death Eaters accompanying

them. The men heard Kingsley, and many of them started to panic and cry; some even tried to stop, but some light magic from the Death Eaters forced them to continue onwards. It was as though shepherds guiding the sheep.

"State your purpose!" Kingsley spoke again.

In response, a shot of magic shot from deep within the village flew over the buildings and followed the course of a projectile, forming a wide arch in the sky until it flew into the ward, turning the silver barrier into gold.

The Aurors and Hit Wizards all braced their wands in caution.

One of the Death Eaters grabbed an old man by the arm in the front and dragged him to the front. "Stop! No! Please take me!" shouted a younger man who looked to be the old man's son. The Death Eater ignored the cries and bought the whimpering old man near the boundary before shoving him through. Everyone stopped their breathing in expectation of something horrible to happen— but nothing as such happened— the old man simply passed through the golden barrier and fell down onto the ground because of the push.

Kingsley rushed forward and knelt beside the old man. He helped him up and asked, "Are you alright, sir."

"Y-Yes," the old man managed between his erratic breathing.

"Send everyone through," ordered the Death Eater in the lead, and the rest of the Death Eaters began pushing the hostages forward. And after seeing the old man cross the barrier without harm, there was much less resistance; some men rushed through it and cried with joy when they passed through unharmed.

When every single one of the men passed through safely, Kingsley called out to the Death Eaters. "What is this?" he asked. The Death Eaters walked away without replying to Kingsley, even when he called out after

them repeatedly.

Kingsley saw one of his Juniors approach the group of men. "Back off!" he yelled. "No one is going to go near them," he pointed his wand at the Hogsmeade men, causing them to cover and huddle together. "Check them thoroughly to see if there's something wrong with them?" He addressed the scared people, "This is for your own safety. If the Dark Lord has done something to you, we will get treat it for you. Please be rest assured; we don't have any intention to harm you."

He looked at Kingsley and gestured for him to follow. Both returned to the tent and found that Scrimgeour was still inside. "Sir, I explicitly asked you to return to Whitehall; why are you still here?" Robards said with a disapproving frown.

"I can protect myself, Robards. Don't forget that even though I'm the Head of DMLE, I'm still enlisted as an active duty Auror."

"Doesn't matter—"

"Why did the Death Eaters let the hostages go?"

"They didn't say," sighed Robards. "We are checking if they have bobby-trapped them in some way."

"This is something out of character. We need to find out why they let them go?" Scrimgeour frowned.

"You do not have to worry about it." The three Aurors stilled for a split second when they heard the distorted voice they all had come across at some point and were well familiar with. When the split-second of stillness, their trained instincts took over, and they whipped their wands toward the source. Sitting on a chair on the corner was Invisible Vigilante dressed in his usual garb with his feet crossed and his hands resting on his knees. "You should focus on how to get into Hogsmeade."

"Avada Kedavra" — there was no hesitation in Scrimgeour's chant or

actions as he unleashed a Killing Curse.

The green jet of magic struck the Invisible Vigilante right in the mask, but instead of getting absorbed in the body, it passed through the mask, leaving behind a hole. "You are lucky I am here to talk," said the masked figure. It was as if the body was made from the mist, and the form had been disturbed by the spell. The mist recollected itself to fix the hole in the face, returning the figure to whole. "I have a way to get all of you inside Hogsmeade and can provide you with credible intel about the Death Eater positioning."

"Why would I believe you?" Scrimgeour spat. None of the Aurors lowered their wards. "You just made Aurors kill innocent people. You deserve to have your soul sucked up by Dementors. If I could only find one to do it."

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Quinn sitting on a rock a distance from the Auror's tent, blinked his eyes in confusion. Him making Aurors kill innocents. . . what was that about?

"My apologies, but I feel like I am missing something," he said, and his illusion in the tent repeated. "I have not made Aurors kill innocents. Why would I waste my time doing such things?"

"You made my men kill seven people at the Wipply Resort," Robards scowled.

"I have not heard of any Wipply Resort," frowned Quinn. Wipply Resorts. . . seven innocents. . . Aurors. . . from those pieces of information, many scenarios were built in his mind until he arrived at the one that made the most sense to him. "Are you sure it was not a Death Eater pretending to be me? I have no interest in killing innocents."

"What if they were children of Death Eaters?"

"Innocent until proven guilty. When did these supposed killings happen?"

"Today," supplied Robards.

"That does not make sense. Why would I waste my time with children when Voldemort has taken over Hogsmeade and is planning a siege on Hogwarts?"

"To take Death Eaters' children hostage and—"

"Again, that does not make sense. Do you think the Dark Lord would stop because of children? He would put his own men under Imperious if they were even a minor inconvenience."

"I still believe you did it," Scrimgeour said testily.

"Does not matter what you believe, "Illusion-Quinn rose up from his chair, and the Aurors reaffirmed their aim. "What matters now is whether you want to get inside Hogwarts or not." He pointed at the table where two pucks sat. "One of those has a detailed description of Death Eaters' routines and patrols, everything you will need to form a plan of attack. The other one is the location of an open Labyrinth exit point which is connected to a door inside Hogsmeade. . ."

From where he was looking, the first part surprised the three Aurors, but the second part boggled their minds. They were so shocked that Quinn was sure if he was there in the tent, he would've taken all three of them with a single spell.

". . . Upto you if you want to take this information and do something good, or if you want to ignore it and continue to risk the lives of the women and children" — what Voldemort had done by only releasing the men had irked him very much — "If I do not do see you all in there, I will come after every single one of you and cripple your entire bodies. You have been warned."

Illusion-Quinn vanished from the tent, and above in the tent roof, an artificial eye peeking through a hole flew away. He would've loved to continue to observe the Aurors, but he had to move and continue to the

next part of the process, and leaving the eye exposed without him nearby would risk his identity getting out.

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". . . Sir, what should we do?" Kingsley, the lowest ranking member in the tent, broke the silence.

Scrimgeour and Robards stared at the two black pucks on the table.

"Have the information he gave us confirmed," Scrimgeour ordered. "If it is true. . . " he looked at Robards ". . . proceed to infiltrate Hogsmeade."

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Quinn West - MC - Keep it moving.

Kingsley Shacklebolt - Captain Auror - Is thinking of writing a book after everything is over.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Next few chapters will be challenging.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

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417. Chapter 417: Entering The

Castle

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Link in the Bio/Profile

Quinn's feet touched the road. He saw the achingly familiar Hogsmeade High Street: dark shop fronts, and the outline of black mountains beyond the village, and the curve in the road ahead that led off toward Hogwarts.

He didn't take that curve and instead took the opposite path and moved to the periphery of the town, stopping in front of a dark and gloomy building in the mostly upbeat town.

He swiped his hand, and there was a grinding of bolts behind the door.

The dark door opened on the narrow street, and he stepped through after scanning the street once.

He saw, by the stuttering light of a single candle, the grubby, sawdust-strewn bar of the Hog's Head Inn. He walked behind the counter and through a second doorway, which led to a rickety wooden staircase that he climbed after looking everywhere else. The stairs opened onto a sitting room with a threadbare carpet and a small fireplace, above which hung a single large oil painting of a blonde girl who gazed out at the room with a kind of vacant sweetness.

The barman-owner of Hog's Head wasn't here anymore. Aberforth

Dumbledore had done a great job of distancing himself from the

Dumbledore name— he had been let out with other men without

Voldemort holding him back to keep leverage against big brother Albus.

It was fortunate. He didn't want Aberforth to become Albus' weakness.

Quinn's eyes traveled to the painting of the girl over the mantelpiece. It

was the only picture in the room. There was no photograph of Albus

Dumbledore nor of anyone else. It was the sister. Youngest of the three

Dumbledore siblings, Ariana Dumbledore. Attacked at the tender age of

six, set upon by three Muggle boys. They'd seen her doing magic, spying

through the back garden hedge: She was a kid; she couldn't control it; no

magical child can at that age— except if they were like Quinn, who

sought out magic and actively tried to get back it.

What the boys saw scared them. . . They forced their way through the

hedge, and when she couldn't show them the trick, they got a bit carried

away trying to stop the little freak from doing it. What the children did, destroyed her: she was never the same again. She wouldn't use magic, but she couldn't get rid of it; it turned inward and drove her mad, it exploded out of her when she couldn't control it, and at times she was strange and dangerous. But mostly, she was sweet and scared and harmless.

Quinn remembered how Ariana and her story were described. Everything could be summed up with a single word: Obscurial. An Obscurus was the manifestation of the repressed energy of a young magical child— known as an Obscurial. Described as a "dark" and "parasitic" force, an Obscurus was created when the wizard child in question consciously attempted to repress their magical abilities or were forced to do so through physical or psychological abuse. This energy could manifest itself as a separate entity that could erupt in violent, destructive fury.

Ariana had once lost control over her magic and ended up killing her mother in an Obscurial rage. Then the poor little girl died in a three-way battle between her brothers and Grindelwald.

"Will you let me in, please," he said to the girl in the portrait. The girl, however, didn't move. . . simply staring at him with curious eyes. He tried again, "I want to get into Hogwarts; may I pass?" He had tested every secret pathway he knew could lead into Hogwarts, but the all-out defense had blocked everything. The path in Hog's Head was the only one he knew could work.

Portrait-Ariana again didn't move. She continued to gaze at him like a curious child, as if he was an oddity that she had encountered for the first time. He looked down, and while his clothes were out of the ordinary, at least he wasn't wearing his mask in his presence. He was sure she wouldn't have looked at him if he had used his Invisible Vigilante's voice. "Me asking won't work, now would it," he sighed. Quinn unclasped the

flap on one of his pockets and summoned one of the objects inside into his palm. It was a palm-sized framed portrait. He expanded it back to its original size and hung it beside Ariana's portrait as she looked on with an inquisitive gaze. In comparison to the simpler frame of Ariana's portrait, the one that Quinn had hung was flamboyant, gilded with gold with intricate design.

"Hey, wake up; I have a job for you," Quinn knocked on the pitch-black portrait, and the pitch-black painting turned into the image of Merlin sitting inside a lavish room, dressed in comfy robes. The portrait had changed quite a lot since Quinn had met Merlin, and every time he went to see the portrait, it would change a little bit. Magical portraits weren't supposed to change like this, but the master of magic had enchanted his post-mortem portrait to be special like him.

"Oh, now that's a surprise," Merlin's eyes shone with interest. It happened every time Quinn interacted with him. The portrait didn't handle boredom well and always seemed to be wanting to do something. "What does the great child prodigy wants from this old fella?"

"Don't start now," sighed Quinn. He lifted his hand again to cast magic, and Merlin turned his head to look to the left towards Ariana's portrait. Quinn had just connected both portraits, allowing Merlin to exit his and go into her. It was easy with the enchantments placed by the real Merlin on his portrait.

"Who is the girl?"

"Ariana Dumbledore."

"Dumbledore? Is she related to the Headmaster?"

"Younger sister."

"What do you want with his younger sister's portrait?"

"Her portrait is special, you can sense, correct?"

"Yes. . . yes, I can sense it," Merlin got up from his desk and made his way to the edge of his frame and disappeared. Quinn moved his eyes to Ariana's, and Merlin appeared into her's from the edge. The little lady took a step back, acting cautiously for the first time. "What's special about this one? There's something. . ."

"Her portrait is an entrance to Hogwarts. She isn't opening the path to me. I don't want to be. . . rough, so can you convince her to open it up."

Merlin joined his hands, touching palms, and kept his eyes on Ariana. When he separated them, there was a charming, cute bluejay sitting on his palm. The bird seemed to do the trick as Ariana forgot her caution and hoped her way to Merlin, who handed her the bird.

"Why don't you use one of the other entries?" said Merlin, watching Ariana with a kind smile.

"Voldemort has taken over Hogsmeade. Dumbledore activated the Hogwarts defense, and that locked up every path I knew. She's the only one who can let me in, so please. . . and quickly."

Merlin looked at Quinn, Ariana slipping out of his attention as soon as the words left Quinn's mouth. "Tell me more about this," said Merlin, moving closer to Quinn.

"Can't we do it later, when I have the time? If you can't tell, I'm swamped."

Merlin continued to look at Quinn. Quinn sighed and took a minute to explain the situation to Merlin and then took three more to answer his answer. "Now, can you get her to open the way?" said Quinn.

Merlin smiled and faced Ariana. He began whispering to the girl, and she looked at Quinn a couple of times. Quinn couldn't tell what they were talking about, so he just smiled and waved.

After a couple minutes, Ariana nodded, smiled, and walked away, not as

people in portraits usually did, out of the sides of their frames, but along what seemed to be a long tunnel painted behind her. They watched her slight figure retreating until finally, she was swallowed by the darkness.

"Can I roam inside the castle?" Merlin asked as they waited.

"Sure, I don't mind. But I'll be removing your portrait from here, in case, Voldemort wipes out the village. I will be back to get you when all this is over; until then, you'll be inside Hogwarts."

"Fine by me."

A tiny white dot had reappeared at the end of the painted tunnel, and now Ariana was walking back toward them, growing bigger and bigger as she came. But there was somebody else with her now, someone taller than she was, holding her hand, looking confused. Her hair was the blonde he loved, and her blue eyes were an electric blue that he had looked into countless times. Larger and larger the two figures grew until only their heads and shoulders filled the portrait. Then the whole thing swung forward on the wall like a little door, and the entrance to a real tunnel was revealed. And out of it, dressed impeccably even in the current situation, clambered Daphne Greengrass, who leaped down the mantelpiece, and hugged Quinn the moment she reached him.

Merlin had popped back into his frame and whistled. Quinn gave him a glare, and the old wizard silently chuckled before disappearing.

"Hey, how are you?" Quinn returned his attention to Daphne. "I hope they're not giving Slytherin a hard time."

Daphne shook her head in his embrace. "I don't know; I haven't gone out that much. Tracey and I stayed with Astoria and Luna in the AID office." AID office's security had been improved by Quinn before he left— it had been fine when he was in Hogwarts because he was the security system, but with him leaving, he had turned into a safer place in case Astoria and

Luna ever needed it. It was only second to the Room of Requirement and maybe the Headmaster's Office.

"Thank you for taking care of Luna," he said.

"Astoria would've done anyway. She and Luna have become best friends."

The hug ended, and Quinn gazed down at his girlfriend. "I messed up," he sighed. "I should've done this much before and taken all of you out, away from this, to home. But I. . ." he sighed again. He had started a ticking clock when he had approached Voldemort and the Aurors. He had made an error— with his mind occupied by Voldemort, he had forgotten that he could let them exit through a Labyrinth door.

"Then why do you want to enter Hogwarts?" asked Daphne, her brows furrowed in confusion.

Quinn internally sighed when he heard no complaint in Daphne's voice. He would've preferred if she had been angry with him and showed some heated emotion. Even though he knew it wasn't the case, her lack of anger sometimes made it seem like she had been used to him disappointing her.

"I have some business with Dumbledore," said Quinn, feeling bitter inside as he said the words to keep her in the dark. "With how the current situation is, I think it's high time I talk to him and see what he is thinking."

Quinn got up into the tunnel and held out his hand to Daphne, and helped her to climb up onto the mantelpiece. There were smooth stone steps on the other side: It looked as though the passageway had been there for years. Brass lamps hung from the walls, and the earthy floor was worn and smooth; as they walked, their shadows rippled, fanlike, across the wall.

"I assume Ivy told you about Voldemort's offer," said Daphne as they

moved across the tunnel.

Quinn's fingers twitched. He showed no external sign otherwise. "She did.

It's an impossible offer. Dumbledore isn't going to give the Potters to him."

They turned a corner, and there ahead of them was the end of the passage. Another short flight of steps led to a door just like the one hidden behind Ariana's portrait. Daphne pushed it open and climbed through, and Quinn followed her to find himself in a room that resembled Daphne's bedroom in her house. Seeing that made Quinn feel worse because it was clearly a sign that she was seeking comfort and safety.

"How about you stay here and call the others as well," Quinn suggested.

Room of Requirement was the safest place in Hogwarts, and he knew just what to ask to make it the safest.

Daphne shook her head. "It's better if I stay inside the office. It'll be better if we stay in a place where we can be found." She took a neatly folded cloth from her robes and placed it in Quinn's palm.

"I don't need it," Quinn tried to give it back.

"No, use it," she said. "You can't be seen in Hogwarts. It's better to be safe than sorry," and pushed it back into Quinn's hands. She tiptoed to kiss him before saying, "Close the Room before you leave."

Quinn watched as she exited the Room of Requirements. He then looked at Recon in his hand. Did he need it? Yes— it made his job much easier.

Was he going to ask it from Daphne if she hadn't given it on her own?

No, he would rather that she keep it.

He felt like shit.

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Quinn West - MC - Knows that it's only the start.

Merlin - Portrait - Wow, Hogwarts sure has become depressing.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - I suck at pacing. I really need to work on it.

. . sigh

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

418. Chapter 418: Securing Asset

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile

Harry lay in the room alone, staring at the ceiling with a vacant gaze.

There was no energy in his body; he didn't want to speak, move, or even blink. Staring at the wall with his mind shut felt the best when he knew there was a group of people, his classmates, even some of his friends, who wanted to give him to Voldemort so that they would be left alone. In a position like this, stopping his thoughts was the best relief he could muster.

He sighed. It had taken some heated and harsh words from him to his mum and friends to leave him alone. It had taken an unflattering tone for them to give him some space. By right about now, he usually would be feeling terrible about it, but right now, his mind couldn't be bothered to go in that direction.

Harry closed his eyes, hoping that sleep would take over him. Alas, the moment he closed his eyes, the empty suite got too loud— the ticking of

clocks, dripping of water from the tap, the gentle ring of the chime from the other room— it felt like Sonorus had been cast on everything. He squeezed his eyes as he smushed a pillow over his ears, and that actually worked as the sounds quietened. . . until he heard a knock on the door. He ignored it. Knocking meant that they didn't have access to get inside the room— and thus, they didn't have access to him. But then the knocking changed. The simple raps on the door turned faster and louder until whoever it was playing a rhythmic beat on the door.

Even he couldn't ignore that. Harry, half-furious, half-bewildered, got up from the bed and made his way to the suite door. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" he pushed the door open forcefully, but contrary to his expectation of the door hitting the rude person, the door swung wide open on its hinges.

"You weren't opening the door."

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Quinn smiled as he responded to the nonplussed Harry and watched as the anger flushed away at his sight. He had used Recon to find Harry in Hogwarts, and to his luck, the Boy-Who-Lived was alone in Lily Potter's Professor's Suite. Thanks to Recon, he had the password to the portrait guarding the room, and he planned to take Hermione's form to fool the portrait in case it decided to go alert Dumbledore about his entry.

But, even before he could arrive in front of the portrait, he sensed an additional ward laid parallel to the door. It wasn't part of the original layout and was placed externally afterward.

"Hello, Harry," Quinn flashed a smile. "I know it's difficult right now, given what's happening, but I hope you're doing well."

"You. . . what are you doing here?" asked Harry, still reeling from the shock of seeing him.

"I came here to visit you, of course. . . won't you invite me in?" asked

Quinn.

"How did you even get inside Hogwarts?" suspicion and caution surfaced on Harry's features.

"I will answer all your questions, but let's sit down before we talk. I've been busy ever since the morning and haven't had the chance to properly sit down and rest," Quinn said as casually as possible. "May I?" he asked.

He needed the permission.

Harry eyed Quinn, looking at him with a searching look, but after a moment, Harry stepped aside.

Quinn smiled and crossed the threshold without hesitation. The additional ward was to alert the caster about an unauthorized entry into the room. Anyone who wasn't keyed into the ward couldn't enter without triggering it. However, there was an easy way to remedy it, and it was to get invited in or obtain permission to enter. And because Intent was a great part of magic, Harry stepping aside was all the permission he needed.

He stepped inside, and the portrait door closed behind him. He had jinxed into being confused so that he could converse with Harry without worrying about giving himself away to the caster, which he presumed was Dumbledore.

Quinn followed Harry into the living room with a homely aesthetic and sat down on opposite chairs. He unbuttoned the button of his suit as he sat down. Transforming his Noir gear from combat mode to a suit was so to make Harry feel comfortable.

"Now answer me, how did you get inside Hogwarts?" asked Harry.

"Not offering me anything to drink. . . No?" Harry scowled the more Quinn spoke, so he stopped. "Doesn't matter. As to answer your

questions, I have my ways. If you're worried about Death Eaters using it, don't be; they don't even know it exists," Aberforth Dumbledore was already out of Hogsmeade and under DMLE care. "Let's talk about you, Harry. I came here to see how you are doing. I heard what Voldemort demanded— how are you taking it? I hope you're not letting it affect your health."

"How do you think I'm talking it?!" said Harry scathingly.

"Not well from what I can see," said Quinn, unbothered. That was the reaction he was expecting from someone in Harry's situation.

"Why are you here?"

"I'm the Invisible Vigilante, Harry. I must be present when the Death Eaters are trying to do something. I was outside Hogsmeade as soon as I got to know about what had happened and have been trying to get inside and elevate this mess ever since." Quinn peered out of the window in the room. "It's terrible out there. Hogsmeade is crawling with Death Eaters; DMLE cannot get in; Innocent people are scared for their lives. I haven't checked what the rest of the country is doing, but I guess it's in chaos. I don't even want to think about how the country is reacting to the news—the economy will suffer for a while after this." He put on a smile, "Ivy had to call me and ask where I kept the Horcrux so you guys could destroy it in case, you know, I died."

Harry's change in expression told Quinn that he hadn't been told about this fact. "S-She asked you that?"

"She had to, didn't have much choice, did she. Can't have the maniac running around forever."

Hearing that from Quinn made Harry go silent. The irritation and anger that had been present before have taken a back seat. That was why Quinn had brought it up; he needed Harry to be in a particular state for

the conversation to follow.

"One good thing happened, though," Quinn continued. "Half of the hostages were released into DMLE custody just before I sneaked into Hogwarts."

". . . What?" Harry seemed deeply surprised by the shocking news. "Why would Voldemort let hostages go? He's planning something. He must've done something to the hostages," he got up. "We should warn DMLE about it—"

"Voldemort released the hostages because of me," said Quinn. Harry, who had already taken steps towards the door, came to a halt. He turned toward him and still seemed to process what was just spoken. Quinn continued, "He and I struck a deal, and releasing the hostages was him upholding his part of the deal."

"You did what?" Harry's voice began to rise. "You struck a deal with HIM?! How can you, of all the people, think that dealing with him is acceptable?! He's going to go back on whatever. . . he has promised. . . ."

Harry trailed off as he stared at Quinn. "What. . . What did you promise him?"

Quinn looked back at Harry silently. The silence seemed to give Harry the answer.

"Me?" he uttered. "You promised me?" There was no anger in his voice; instead, there was a strange sense of something that Quinn couldn't pinpoint. There was a shock, confusion, fear, hate. . . but everything was shadowed by a convoluted sense of resignation.

"If I get him to you, he will let the Hogsmeade residents go," said Quinn.

"I'm counting on him to leave after that to spread the news across the country to anyone who would listen. I can imagine what would happen after that, but at least today will end. We can. . ." Quinn stopped when he

saw that Harry was no longer listening.

He got up from his chair, and his suit changed into Noir gear's combat mode. "The deal had been struck; Voldemort has already delivered half of what he has promised. So if I go back on his deal now, he will kill the rest of the hostages," he said. "I don't want this to be more difficult than it already is."

Quinn sensed the sense of resignation get stronger in Harry as he said, "I can't say goodbyes, or even see them, can I. . ."

"Do you want to say goodbyes?" That would just make things difficult.

Harry smiled bitterly, and the hate flared up a little, peeking through the resignation. "How do you think Ivy will react when she finds out that her precious boyfriend," there was venom in his voice, "sent her brother. . . her twin to death."

Quinn didn't show the emotion that Harry was expecting. But he also didn't show the opposite reaction to firing back at Harry. "I'm the biggest mistake she's made in her life. I don't understand why she hasn't left me already. I'm too much of a trouble to be in a relationship. After this, I'm going to lose her trust, and well, that's going to be the end of everything. . . . Does that answer your question?"

He turned away from Harry for a moment because his Occlumency didn't seem to be working, no matter how much he tried to clamp down it.

"Come on, take your wand with you; we are leaving right now," he said.

"You're making me walk to my death; the least you could do is to knock me out and not make me suffer in the last moments of my life."

Quinn nodded, "Yeah. . . Yeah, you're right," he nodded again. Quinn turned to Harry, raised his arm, and knocked Harry out cold as he wished for. He looked down at Harry and sighed. Harry's attitude wasn't going to be optimal for what was about to come. If plans were going according to

plan, he needed Harry to be a little more. . . resistant.

"Well, not if I have something to say about it," he muttered and levitated the unconscious boy off the ground. "Not if I have something to say about it." And he had a lot to say about it.

Sneaking out of Hogwarts was as easy as getting in. He got to the seventh floor without being seen, courtesy of Recon. The Room of Requirement was set up to keep a path open for him because he had to return to Hogwarts.

As he walked through the tunnel, he had his eyes on Recon. His steps faltered and eventually slowed down to a crawl when he saw the group of Ivy, Hermione, and Ron move towards the room. He steeled himself and increased his walking pace. By the time he reached Hog's Head, his feet felt like lead, and as much as he tried, he couldn't keep his eyes off Recon.

In real-time, he watched as the three entered the suite. Ivy and Ron settled in the living room, but Hermione made her way deep into the suite. . . and what followed was what he expected. He stepped into the old inn as he watched the three dots run around.

He closed his eyes, and with them, Recon. 'Don't do this now,' he told himself. 'You have to do this to end all of this. For freedom. . .' He resolved himself and walked to the front door

And that's why it hurt when he felt the mirror in his pocket buzz.

It hurt worse when he knew he couldn't pick up.

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Quinn West - MC - The fall down the hole doesn't seem to end.

Harry Potter - Boy-Who-Lived - Darkness before darkness.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction

or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the Bio!

419. Chapter 419: Delivery, Door,

Death

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile

Voldemort stood on the town hall's roof alone and gazed at Hogwarts.

The Hogwarts defense ward obstructed his vision from seeing Hogwarts in all its glory, but despite that, he could see it clearly as if there was no ward between them. After all, the castle was the place he considered his home. And it was going to be his symbol of power, his throne, when he took over the country and everything else after that.

His eyes narrowed a fraction as a white scar slowly burned like the magnesium flame on the yellow ward. He was close to breaking the outer ward; the moment it was down, he and his Death Eaters would gain access to Hogwarts. He was sure there would be more defenses— old bat Dumbledore won't just put a single layer— but as long as he gained entry, everything could be taken care of much more smoothly.

He looked down on the roof he was standing on and thought about the people inside. If he was given what he was promised, they would live to see the next day— but if he got through the Hogwarts ward first, they would be on their way to eternal sleep.

'Pitiful things, going to die tonight,' he had supreme confidence in his skill after all.

Voldemort's face crinkled in displeasure when a foreign object entered his perception. He turned his eyes to look at the tiny puppet spider that crawled atop the roof from the edge. Ever since the last one had jumped off his shoulder, none of these pesky things had approached him— this could only mean that the Invisible Vigilante had been faster.

Then as he expected, the distorted voice sounded in his ears, "I have what you need; let the women and children go."

"That wasn't the deal, Vigilante. You were the one who set the conditions of our exchange— half of the hostages before you deliver Harry Potter and the rest after I have him. I upheld my part of the deal and released half, now give me Harry Potter, and I shall reciprocate in equal."

"I don't trust that you'll continue to withhold the deal. I need you to release the rest of the hostages for me to deliver Harry Potter to you."

"I don't trust you too. How do I know that you have Harry Potter? I, without a shred of doubt in my mind, believe you don't have the boy with you. I should just kill every person in my custody right this moment. It would take a word from me to make it happen."

"I have proof that I have Harry Potter with me."

"I'm sure it's something that can be replicated," Voldemort moved towards the puppet spider. "Discussions are over; now it's time for you to know the consequences of crossing me."

He was about to crush the spider under his feet when he heard the Invisible Vigilante voice again, "Three Broomsticks." Voldemort was expecting more, but nothing else came through. Then the spider burst into a small firecracker.

"Three Broomsticks, it is. . ."

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The entrance to Three Broomsticks burst open with the heavy wooden gate flying into the inn. Before the smoke could even settle, Death Eaters invaded in, barging in with their wands pointed and ready to cast. They ran through the inn and cleared every corner to check for any occupants.

"It's clear, my Lord," said one of the Death Eaters.

Voldemort entered the building and looked around the pub part of the inn that he hadn't visited since the time Dumbledore had refused him the position of Defense Against Dark Arts Professor. It had changed a lot since then.

"A waste of time; I should've killed the hostages already," he said.

Voldemort turned away and was about to leave when one of his Death Eaters called for him.

"My Lord, there's something here."

In between an inner part of the seating section, all the tables and chairs had been pushed to the side, creating a wide empty circle. In the middle of that circle floated a wand shimmering in an ethereal red and gold color.

Voldemort could tell that the glow was purely for aesthetic reasons, but it seemed to be working as the moment he laid his eyes on the wand, he could tell what it actually was. He stepped into the circle and wrapped his fingers around the wand's length.

!~Woom~!

Voldemort closed his eyes. It wasn't any different from any other wand he had held, excluding his own. He didn't even have its allegiance, but despite that, he could instantly feel the connection between him and the wand. The Phoenix feather inside the wand felt so familiar that for a second, even his magic thought that the wand was his. But it wasn't his

wand. Oh no, it was not.

"Release the hostages," the distorted voice whispered in his ear.

Voldemort stared at the wand in his hand. There was no way to replicate this feeling. Even if the Phoenix gave more feathers now, they wouldn't be the same.

"Augustus," he called.

"Yes, my Lord," responded one of his most cunning, trusted, and without a doubt most skilled retainers.

"Release the rest of the hostages."

"My Lord? I think we shouldn't give away our—"

"Release the hostages, Augustus. I won't repeat myself."

". . . If that's what you wish." Rookwood exited Three Broomsticks to complete Voldemort's order.

Voldemort clenched his fist around the wand until it snapped into half.

He opened his hand and let the pieces fall, but they incinerated into ash mid-fall, and the ashes flew into the air before any could reach the floor.

That took care of one problem. With its twin gone, his wand won't betray him now.

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On a rooftop somewhere in the country, a large group of Aurors stood on the roof of a large warehouse.

"He wasn't lying," Kingsley said, looking to the small storeroom in the room. "There's a Labyrinth exit, alright." The door was bright red and was opened. Looking through it, they could see the inside of a house.

Robards pursed his lips and frowned deeply. They now had a way into Hogsmeade through which they could send their forces in, directly

bypassing the ward cast by the Dark Lord— but this great boon was provided by a criminal who had used Unforgivables and had made Aurors kill innocent people and had himself killed a child in front of an Auror.

On the one hand, Robards thought this was just Invisible Vigilante could be using them for his own means. He had been a vigorous opposer of Death Eaters and the Dark Lord and might be using the Aurors to trim the number of Death Eaters down without making a move himself. But if he flipped the coin, a part of his mind said that maybe the man who had killed at the resort and someone— most probably Death Eaters— was trying to frame him. But without proof, he didn't know what to think. And with the current situation, he had no time to ponder about it.

"Ready the teams," said Robards. "We will be going inside. We need to get the remaining hostages out safely and take down the Death Eaters." He turned to one of the communication members on the roof, "Ask Senior Auror Potter to tell Dumbledore to enter Hogsmeade— we need his help to handle the Dark Lord. God, I hope he kills that psychotic maniac."

"The teams are ready; we just need to relay the assignment to them and let them plan for it," said Kingsley. "We are ready to deploy after that."

"Wait for Dumbledore to respond. We will coordinate the infiltration with him."

"Understood."

"I'm returning to Whitehall; you're in charge, Kingsley—"

There was a loud pop on the rooftop immediately followed by a loud voice. "Sir, the rest of the hostages have been released!" yelled the Junior Auror that had just arrived.

"What, again?!"

According to the report, all of the hostages in Hogsmeade had been

released. Everyone was accounted for, and except the three people who had been killed and hanged, everyone else was present and out of danger. No one else had been harmed inside, and they hadn't been cursed by some hidden dark spell. The Unspeakables were observing the hostages in case the Aurors had missed something laid outside their knowledge.

"What should we do now, sir?" asked Kingsley.

"Nothing changes," Robards replied. "We still coordinate with Dumbledore— but now, there's no need for it to be a covert operation. We go in strong and wipe them out as swiftly as possible."

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Harry snapped his eyes open and found himself staring at the sky, peeking through the canopy of the trees around him. He sat straight up and groaned, for his chest hurt with a dull ache. 'Why did he hit me so hurt,' Harry thought as he rubbed the part of his chest where he had been struck with the stunning spells.

He looked around and wondered where he was. The sun was about to set, and the sky had already taken over the blue tint of the evening. He got up and dusted off his clothes. Just standing there felt uncomfortable; everything was quiet, too quiet— there was no wind, so the ambiance was missing the rustle of leaves. Even him shifting on his feet only produced a dull sound.

Where was Quinn? He tried to locate his abductor, but the black-clad Vigilante was nowhere to be seen. Why would he leave him here? Such thoughts passed through his mind. Then— Maybe I can go. . . a hopeful thought popped in part of his mind, which then became increasingly

louder and sounded plausible and possible.

But then he heard a rustle, and he abruptly turned with his heart leaping in his throat. The rustle was from a bush being pushed aside, and one look dried the hope and optimism in the Well of his heart.

"Harry Potter. . ." Voldemort entered the clearing, dressed in the dark robes that seemed to be his only clothes as he had been wearing the same when they had met at the graveyard. He had his hands folded over his wand in front of him. "You're here. . . I thought I wouldn't find you here. . . but here you are. . . finally," he said in his high, clear voice, his eyes on the leaping flames.

Voldemort stepped forward, and Harry took two steps back. His nerves jumped when he heard more and more rustling. Two figures emerged from behind a nearby tree: Their wands flared, and Harry saw Bellatrix and Dolohov peering into him with grins on their faces. More followed after them, and soon, he was surrounded by masked and hooded Death Eaters forming a loose perimeter around the clearing.

Every eye was fixed upon him. Nobody spoke. Harry, whose heart was now throwing itself against his ribs as though determined to escape the body he was about to cast aside.

"It seems. . . I wasn't mistaken," Voldemort stepped forward.

At that moment, he felt that nobody mattered but Voldemort. It was just the two of them. And the lack of his wand near his chest made his stomach feel queasy.

"Harry Potter," he said very softly. His voice might have been part of the spitting fire. "The Boy-Who-Lived."

None of the Death Eaters moved. They were waiting: Everything was waiting.

Voldemort had raised his wand. His head was still tilted to one side, like

a curious child, wondering what would happen if he proceeded. Harry looked back into the red eyes, and wanted it to happen now, quickly, while he could still stand, before he lost control, before he betrayed fear

—
He saw the mouth move and a flash of green light, and everything was gone.

.
Quinn West - Invisible Vigilante - Deal is done.

Harry Potter - Boy-Who-Lived - Green seeing green.

Voldemort - Dark Lord - It's done.

FictionOnlyReader - Author - Health problems really ruin plans. Be healthy everyone, do take care of your health.

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If you have any ideas regarding the magic you want to see in this fiction or want to offer some ideas regarding the progression. Move onto the DISCORD Server and blast those ideas.

The link is in the synopsis!

420. Chapter 420: Limbo

If you want to read ahead of the posting schedule then head over to my Patreón.

All the chapters would still be posted here, but you can support me with a donation and get chapters earlier than usual as a bonus.

Link in the Bio/Profile

"My Lord . . . my Lord . . ."

It was Bellatrix, and she spoke as if to a lover. Quinn watched the scene from above using the artificial eye. Voldemort stood in the middle a few steps from Harry's body, with the Death Eaters standing on the edge of the clearing. Quinn's vision solely concentrated on the body that lay

prone on the ground. His heart beat so vehemently that he feared the sound of it would give his position out to Voldemort.

It was done, he thought. The most problematic Horcrux of all— the most problematic Horcrux that was ever created— was taken care of. Harry Potter, the accidental Horcrux of Dark Lord Voldemort, was taken care of, and that too by the hands of the creator and owner himself. The irony provided Quinn a moment of delight and a sense of hope that the next part of the problem— the one on which HIS personal life depended, would also go as smoothly as things had been.

He clutched his hand around the cold black stone in one hand as he raised the other to touch the target. His magic responded to his summons, following his heartfelt desire, obeying his Will, and flowed in two different directions through his arms into his hands. A broken breath escaped him as he felt the Resurrection Stone come alive in his palm, the masterfully crafted artifact, the only object he had seen that could interact with the mystical entity called soul.

'You better have not given up,' he thought, 'because I have not.' He gagged as an otherworldly discomfort clutched his body. The Resurrection Stone was contacting his soul, something that wasn't to be touched by anything or anyone but himself. It felt like someone was clutching his heart in their palm. Push on, Quinn told himself, pushing his magic forth through his other hand to touch the other soul that was still tethered to the body, but only barely. The magic made contact, and his vision flooded with a stark white light, and at the same time, he lost his connection with the artificial eye looking over at the scene of a teenager's murder.

It was overwhelming. His eyes saw nothing but blinding white. . . no sound reached his ear, not even from inside of his head. . . he couldn't

inhale or exhale. . . he felt nothing yet everything at the same time. The moment when the overwhelming nothingness passed, Quinn found himself screaming his throat out.

He stopped immediately. His legs suddenly gave up, and he stumbled backward until his back met a wall. Quinn looked around, his eyes swarming at the sudden change of scenery, and saw that he was standing in some sort of a tunnel. The moment that realization set, loud cheers entered his ears, and he looked to his left to see a bright exit from where the loud noise of people, horns, and drums came from.

He knew the place. The entrance tunnel in the Hogwarts Quidditch stadium opened up to the field. It was from where the teams entered the field with all the fanfare. He had been there a few times to recognize—yet it was different. . . . He stood in a bright mist, though it was not like mist he had ever experienced before. His surroundings were not hidden by cloudy vapor; rather, the cloudy vapor had not yet formed into the surroundings. The floor on which he stood seemed to be white, neither warm nor cold, but simply there, a flat, blank something on which to be. Quinn knew he was in the right place. It wasn't King's Crossing, but it was just as it had been portrayed in the original—

"Quinn. . . is that you?" called a voice. Quinn looked away from the well-maintained ground outside and turned back to see Harry Potter standing a couple foot from him. Harry looked around the place as confused as he was moments before, taking everything that the surroundings gave him so that he could make sense of it.

"The tunnel? Where is this, Quinn? Why does the tunnel look like this? Was it you who was screaming just now?" Harry looked down at himself and gasped when he found that he was naked. His hands had just gone to his crotch when a robe appeared in front of him. He took them and

pulled them on. "What is happening?" Harry asked Quinn, looking bewildered. "Is this the Room of Requirement? What are those noises; can you hear them?"

Quinn, too, heard the noises. Odd thumping and whimpering noises coming from somewhere close by in the mist. Harry turned slowly on the spot, and his surroundings seemed to invent themselves before his eyes. The other side of the tunnel formed into the way to the dressing room—however, unlike the bright exit, the path to the dressing room was dark, yet at the same time, it was a comforting dark with an aura of peace emanating from it.

"W-What is that?" Harry's voice brought Quinn out of staring at the darkness. He had spotted the thing that was making the noises. It had the form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering on the side of the tunnel where it had been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath.

Harry looked to be afraid of it. Small and fragile and wounded though it was, it was clear he did not want to approach it. Nevertheless, he drew slowly nearer, ready to jump back at any moment. Soon he stood near enough to touch it, yet his hand didn't move any forward.

"You should probably not touch it," said Quinn when he saw the self-deprecating expression on Harry's face. Harry backed off, but his eyes remained on the ugly baby-like creature.

"What happened?" asked Harry. "Where is this place? I . . . I should be dead. I'm . . . dead?"

"Straight to the main course, huh," Quinn smiled. "That is the question, isn't it? If you want my opinion, I would say I think not."

They looked at each other, Quinn still smiling.

"Not?" repeated Harry.

"Definitely not."

"But . . ." Harry raised his hand instinctively toward the lightning scar. It did not seem to be there. "But I should have died— I didn't defend myself! I meant to let him kill me!"

"Thank you for that. It would've been a problem if he used something other than the Killing curse. You know why, don't you?"

"I let him kill me, didn't I?"

"You did. Go on."

"So the part of his soul that was in me. . ."

Quinn nodded.

". . . has it gone?"

"Oh, yeah, definitely. He fired that Killing curse and burned the Horcrux right off. Pretty great for all parties concerned. . . excluding Voldemort, of course— it's pretty bad for him. And your soul is intact, complete, and in great health."

"But then. . . but if Voldemort used the Killing curse and nobody died for me this time— how can I be alive?"

"Oh, he took your blood and doomed himself. He took your blood and rebuilt his living body with it. Your blood's in his veins, Harry. Your grandmother's protection inside both of you. He tethered you to life while he lives."

"I live . . . while he lives? But I thought . . . I thought it was the other way round! I thought we both had to die? Or is it the same thing?" Harry had clearly been made aware of the prophecy.

Quinn then began to explain the entire spiel about Harry's grandmother's protection, the accidental Horcrux that was Harry, their double connection, and everything that had made it possible for Harry not to die

at the hands of Voldemort.

"You knew all that?" asked Harry.

"Uh-huh, you can say that. I researched the matter extensively, and my instincts always pointed to the fact that you'll be alright," Quinn looked him up and down. "Well, it turns out I was right. It feels good to be right."

"What is this place?" asked Harry.

"This place. . . is the Limbo," said Quinn. "It's the place between life and death. You're not dead, but the Killing curse is still a magic that causes the soul to be ejected from the body— your soul's tie to your body has been loosened— bringing it here."

"If this is the place between life and death, how are you here?"

At that moment, Quinn felt the Resurrection Stone materialize in his hand. He raised his hand and showed Harry the darkest black in the misty white place. "The Resurrection Stone, one of the great Deathly Hallows," said Quinn. "It allowed my soul to come here," he sighed.

"You mean the story about the three brothers and Death."

"It's a story based in reality. Your Cloak of Invisibility, Dumbledore's Elder Wand, and my Resurrection Stone. All of them are masterfully crafted artifacts, second to none." Quinn smiled, "Let's go back home, Harry. Everyone must be sick waiting for you."

And that's when the problem arrived. Harry didn't look excited at the prospect of returning. "What if. . . what if I didn't want to return?" he said.

"Why would you want that?"

"Even if it's gone from inside me, it won't matter to Voldemort. He's going to continue to come after me. I don't want to live in fear of an unkillable monster coming for me. I don't want to be scared of that every second of

my life."

"He's not unkillable. You and I both know how he can be defeated. With the Horcrux in you gone, we are one step closer to killing him for good."

"It doesn't matter. Dumbledore says there are seven Horcruxes. We have destroyed the Diary and Ring— three if you include me. You have another one, but that still leaves three more that we don't know anything about. I don't think I'll survive until then— so why delay the inevitable."

Harry looked at both sides of the tunnel. "I can feel that if I go out," he pointed to the exit, "I'll return, but if I go back," he pointed towards the dressing room, "all of this will be over for good."

Quinn had feared that. He had sensed from how easily Harry had come with him that it might be a problem to bring him back from the Limbo, that Harry might not choose to return home. In the fight to defeat Voldemort, Harry's return wasn't essential— but for Quinn, Harry's return meant everything; if he lost him, everything Quinn worked for would go to waste.

"And what about everyone who loves you, who cares about you. What about them?" asked Quinn. "You're just going to abandon them? What about your parents and Ivy, who care for you? What about Hermione; if you thought you were never going to escape Voldemort, why did you continue going out with her— you should've broken up with her." If Quinn could have forced him to be alive, he could've done it— he had been researching for it, but he hadn't had enough time to figure it out. If he couldn't force him, he was going to go the other way. "Like it or not, you're the Boy-Who-Lived. If you die, Voldemort's going to win at everything people all around the country are working hard to not let him."

"So, I'm never going to be free? I will always be Boy-Who-Lived."

"You're going to be free when Voldemort's dead. If there's no Dark Lord, there will not be a Boy-Who-Lived."

"We come full circle again. Voldemort won't die, and I'll always be trapped," Harry sighed and began to walk backward towards the dressing room. "Say my goodbye to everyone. . . and I'm sorry for what this will do to you and Ivy. . . . Please take care of everyone."

Quinn pursed his lips. He would lie if he understood where Harry was coming from. His situation was much too different from anything he had experienced. He didn't know what was going on in Harry's head— but it was clear that the boy had no hope.

So he was going to give him some.

"Voldemort can die today. I can kill him today."

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Quinn West - MC - I can. . . it depends. Also, guess where I am now.

Harry Potter - Boy-Who-Lived - I'm really tired. . .

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