

“Will it be a problem for you, if we kick them out?” he worried. The last thing he wanted was Boot and his allies going back to Voldemort and insisting that Snape was no longer loyal.

The Potions Master’s face was drawn as he looked at Harry. “I cannot say for sure, but I doubt it. If they had the evidence to condemn me, they likely would have done it by now.”

“We’ll ask Horace for Veritaserum,” Kingsley suggested. “If he doesn’t have any, we’ll tell him to pretend yours came from him. Save you having to explain why you didn’t sabotage it so that Boot could cover his arse.”

Snape gave a curt nod. “Thank you.”

Kingsley turned to the two Gryffindor boys. “Can you find Amelia? She’ll need to be involved in this.”

Harry closed his eyes, reaching out to the wards in search of the familiar magical signature of Amelia Bones. It ached, connecting to Hogwarts’ magic while it was aiding Hannah. A searing pain at the base of his spine — merely an echo of what his friend was feeling.

“She’s in the Hospital Wing,” Neville said, coming to the conclusion the same time as Harry. “I guess she heard what happened.” Amelia hadn’t been at the training session, as she was in a meeting with McGonagall elsewhere about things that weren’t Harry’s business to know.

“Right, then. Off we go,” Tonks declared. “Then we can find this Boot kid.”

Snape didn’t come with them up to the Hospital Wing, but when they arrived they found a cluster of people around Hannah’s bed. The girl was still unconscious, spelled rigid in the bed while Pomfrey’s potions and spells did their best to repair the damage.

“What did you find?” Susan pressed, rushing over to Harry. “You know who did it, right? Who hurt Hannah?” She had puffy red eyes and tear-tracks down her cheeks, and Harry had to swallow the lump in his throat that formed.

“It was Terry, Sooz. Terry Boot.”

There was a beat of silence. Then, Ernie swore. “That filthy little— we trusted him! He was Hannah’s friend, he... we’ve known each other since we were eleven!” He looked absolutely wrecked, his hands clenched around the rail at the foot of Hannah’s bed. Harry’s heart twisted in sympathy.

“I know,” he murmured. “But it was him.” He looked back to Amelia. “We confirmed through pensieve memory. Kingsley’s memory,” he explained. “I... we don’t know how to proceed.”

There was the sound of a throat being cleared, and they all turned around to see Horace Slughorn tentatively approaching. There was a vial of clear fluid in his hand. “I— excuse me, but I was asked to bring this to you, Amelia, dear.” He held the vial out to her. “I always keep some tucked away — for emergencies, you know. Especially in these difficult times.” A