

Bill's embarrassment faded in the wake of concern, but Harry discreetly shook off his worry. He wasn't sure what Tonks wanted, but he doubted she'd do anything to him with half the Order around. Sirius said his cousin was one of the good ones.

"We'll catch up with you in a bit," Harry assured the eldest Weasley, and followed Tonks through to the small parlour nearby. He kept his hand ready to draw his wand from its holster, especially when she privacy-warded the door. She turned to face him, and her eyes darted to the movement — then immediately turned sad.

"I'm on your side," she blurted. "I mean— I wanted to say sorry, for how I acted when we came to pick you up from your relatives' house."

Harry tensed, eyeing her suspiciously. "Why, because you feel bad for taking this long to figure it out?" he asked, somewhat harshly.

"No, because I knew from the start and I was trying to see if Mad-Eye would say anything," came the reply. Tonks sighed, her hair shifting from pink to a deep purple. "Well, I didn't know the specifics. I don't think any of us did. But... Sirius is my cousin. I knew right from the get go that things weren't right with him and Dumbledore. I talked to him about it, the few times it was just the two of us in the house. He told me he was worried about you, that he knew the muggles didn't treat you right — and he knew Dumbledore knew that, and kept sending you back there anyway."

Trying to keep his face impassive, Harry was internally wide-eyed at the onslaught of information. That was not what he'd expected — why hadn't Sirius warned him he'd spoken to Tonks??

"So you're not Dumbledore's biggest fan either, then?" he surmised, wondering exactly what he could get away with saying. Tonks snorted derisively.

"Not hardly. Old man always did put his nose more places than it was ever wanted," she retorted. "I'm here because Kingsley's here. And Kingsley's here because he wants Voldemort gone, and he knows that's more likely to happen with Dumbledore than the Ministry." She paused. "Sirius told me you're the Black heir," she admitted. "That makes you family. And if you've learned anything yet about being a Black, it's that family comes first." The smile she shot him was vicious, and Harry grinned back.

"He mentioned he'd talked to your mother. He didn't tell me he'd told you." It was exhausting, trying to keep track of who knew which secrets. Harry would write it down if he wasn't so worried about the information getting into the wrong hands.

"Most people think that because Mum was disinherited, I don't give a toss about all that pureblood Wizengamot stuff," Tonks drawled. "It makes me a good target for people like Dumbledore to try and sway over to their side. As far as the Order's concerned, I think all purebloods can go hang. Now I'm not trying to barge my way in to whatever secrets you've got going on; I just wanted to let you know that you've got an ally in me, for whatever you need. Kingsley, too, even if it doesn't seem like it," she added, correctly interpreting the look on Harry's face. Harry hadn't spent much time with the older auror, but from the little he had seen, the man seemed very... by the book. "He's head of the Shackbolt family. He's been