

Sure, he had his connections through the Dark Marks, drawing on his followers' power when his own faltered, but even so...

Harry hoped his maturation was as big as they expected. He'd need every last bit of it to win that fight.

Suddenly Hannah's knees buckled, the Hufflepuff girl caught at the last minute by a divan the Room provided. "Ohh, I'm dizzy," she groaned, clutching her head.

"Dobby," Harry called, and the elf was there in an instant. "The school, is it safe?"

Dobby's ears flapped as he nodded. "The students is safe in they's dorms. The wards is not being breached." He looked at Harry worriedly. "We is taking you to Hospital Wing now." It was a statement, not a request, but Harry didn't have it in him to argue. Three more elves appeared, one for each heir.

Madam Pomfrey shrieked in alarm when four patients appeared suddenly in beds in her ward, house elves at their sides. Her hand flew to her face when she realised who those patients were. "It's over, then?" she asked, rushing to aid them. Harry nodded, a grim look on his face.

"For now, at least."

Voldemort would try again, that was for sure — he would not take well to being denied entry, to being made to look weak in front of his followers.

But after that, it would take him quite a while to recover. They had bought some time, at least.

...-.-.-.

Lord Voldemort sat in a high-backed, throne-like chair. Severus, stood in the front row of the gathered Death Eaters, could see the faint tremors running through the man's form.

He had been unconscious for three days straight, after failing to breach the Hogwarts wards. For two days after that he had refused to be seen by anyone but Severus and Rabastan. Severus had been sent a request for restorative potions, and they seemed to have helped — he himself had needed a few, after the drain on his magic through his Mark. He had another one brewing back at the school, one that would take another two weeks to prepare.

But none of them had seen their Lord cast a single spell since.

"Severus," came the hissing voice, halfway to Parseltongue, barely louder than a whisper. "Come forward."

Severus did as bid, kneeling in front of the chair. Rabastan stood at their master's side like an honour guard, wand held in the clockwork hand of the arm Voldemort had so graciously provided him.