

“Well met.” Then her gaze sobered. “Thank you, for your swift warning. Very impressive Patronus, by the way.”

Harry smiled halfheartedly. “Thank you. I wasn’t sure it would make it, I’ve never sent a proper message before.”

“We would have arrived sooner, but it took time to get *authorisation* to break the Ministry’s own wards,” Madam Bones replied, sending a scathing look at the still-blabbering Minister. “What happened? Where’s Susan?”

“Department of Mysteries,” Harry responded. “She was alright when I last saw her. They’re all down there, with a bunch of Death Eaters.”

Bones nodded sharply, and with a call to the Aurors she was leading a group to the lifts. Harry hoped Sirius scarpered before any officials arrived.

“I will explain everything, Cornelius, as soon as I have sent Harry back to school,” Dumbledore was saying loudly, reaching out to put a hand on Harry’s shoulder. Harry tensed.

“Harry Potter?” Fudge jolted, as if he’d only just realised Harry was there. “What— what is he doing here? What is the meaning of this?”

“As I have said, I will explain once he is safely back at Hogwarts,” said Dumbledore patiently. Harry glared at him, stepping back.

“I’m not leaving without my friends.” He made sure to raise his voice, cause a scene. Anyone who hadn’t already been staring at him absolutely was now.

“Harry, my boy, you have been through a lot tonight,” Dumbledore placated. “You must get back to school, where Madam Pomfrey can check on you.”

“My friends need to get back, too,” he insisted. “Or do you not want the public to know that six school children defended the entire Ministry from two dozen Death Eaters for almost an hour and a half before anyone showed up?”

That sent a cascade of whispers through the crowd, and Harry saw Dumbledore’s tiny wince.

“I just want you to be safe, my boy.”

“If you wanted me safe then where were you half an hour ago when Lucius Malfoy was trying to kill me?” Harry shouted. Many of the onlookers gasped, and Fudge turned an interesting shade of puce. “He’s dead, by the way. Fell through that weird veil thing. I’m assuming it kills people, at least.” Harry didn’t want Malfoy’s disappearance to be swept under the rug without a body. He wanted as many people as possible to know what had happened.

Dumbledore frowned, and the next thing Harry knew the headmaster was reaching out towards him with what looked like a bottlecap between his fingers. He pressed it into Harry’s hand, then pulled back and muttered a word, and Harry was spinning, the world a riot of colour.