

“Please, God, yes,” Harry blurted, making the redhead giggle. “We’ve got some easier laws next, right? Nothing likely to get their backs up like this?” He hadn’t thought something as simple as bringing the traditional Yule and Samhain and Beltane rituals back into legality would be so divisive; half the purebloods had been secretly practicing them for years anyway. It wasn’t like they were trying to bring back blood rituals!

“Yeah, don’t worry — the next few are just abolishing all those stupid ancient laws about flying carpet regulations.”

Harry sighed in relief, packing up the papers around him into his new dragonhide briefcase. It was a belated birthday present from Charlie — ethically sourced, from a dragon who had died of natural causes. It was bigger on the inside, locked to everyone but him, and with the naturally spell-resistant hide could be used as a shield in a pinch.

Harry wasn’t sure what it said about him that, even with the Dark Lord gone, his family still expected him to get into the types of situations that would require an unexpected shield.

Packed up and ready to go, Susan slipped a note under Amelia’s office door to tell her they were headed back to Hogwarts for the afternoon, then the pair of them headed for the lift.

Even now, a week after the battle and with Harry in and out of the Ministry most days, he still got gawped at like the second coming of Merlin.

They stepped into the atrium, and immediately noticed something was off; there was a commotion further down the busy hall. Both of them had wands in their hands in a split second, creeping towards the source of the noise. Harry’s heart stopped.

It was Dumbledore.

The old man looked every one of his hundred and fifteen years, his body thin beneath his lurid star-spangled red robe, his gaunt face mostly hidden by his ragged beard. His cursed hand was still shrivelled — Harry’s gaze narrowed in on the ring on his finger. The resurrection stone. When had he had that re-set? Severus had told him the original ring housing it was destroyed.

“Really, I must get in to see Minister Bones immediately,” he was saying, facing a security guard who looked deeply unimpressed.

“Minister Bones is busy,” the guard said flatly, “and quite frankly, Mr Dumbledore, the things I’ve heard about you, you should be glad you’re not under arrest.”

“But that’s just it!” Dumbledore exclaimed. “I must speak with Minister Bones and get all this straightened out. It’s just a big misunderstanding, really; a silly thing that got quite out of hand!”

“You kidnapped Harry Potter!” the guard exclaimed, raising his eyebrows.

“It was a ruse!” Dumbledore said, “an attempt to distract Voldemort while Harry and I took the necessary steps to rid him of his immortality. There was never any true division between