

However, it was also decided that they couldn't kill them in cold blood. Nor did they have anywhere to imprison them. So the only other option was to snap their wands and send them away from the castle.

It was a risk, the potential of facing them on the battlefield shortly, but it was all they could do. Not everyone was happy with the decision, but they didn't have time to keep arguing it out.

Kingsley wasn't entirely thrilled with the decision either, but it was the best one they had. There was no sending people to Azkaban, not these days.

Ever since the attack, the atmosphere had changed within the castle. No longer was there a sense of tentative camaraderie, of banding together in the same rebellion. Mealtimes in the Great Hall were no longer cheerful, good-humoured gatherings with everyone trying to make the best of things and reach out to their fellows.

People kept to themselves, to their families and close friends. Meals were quiet, groups sat around in clusters with their heads bowed, occasionally sending suspicious glances across the hall at someone or another. Usually at Severus, if he was around, but plenty of others were seemingly suspect to their peers as well. Old school grudges, or workplace arguments, petty squabbles rising to the surface as accusations of treachery. From talking to Harry, Kingsley knew the castle wards were regularly freezing people to break up fights. Almost like Hogwarts was trying to make up for what happened to one of its heirs.

They didn't have group training sessions in the hall, anymore. Not like before — duels were conducted one at a time, under heavy shields and tight surveillance. It was slower, but it was safer.

The HA, Harry's little militia group, were hit hardest of all. Both as friends of Hannah Abbott, and as ex-friends of Terry Boot. He and the other one, the Entwhistle boy, had been members from the beginning, Kingsley knew. He had been one of them, trusted and cared for. And he had still turned away.

That was the true power of the Dark Lord — not his magical strength, but his ability to twist peoples' minds and desires until they turned on their own friends under the firm belief that it was the best way forward.

Kingsley did his best to keep things under control. Between strategy meetings and training supervision and all the minutiae that came with organising a rebellion, he tried to maintain structure and authority. Most of the adults listened to him, familiar with his long auror career.

Most of the students did not, but he left those brats to Harry. He was the only one they ever seemed to obey.

They were a week shy of Harry's seventeenth birthday, and something would need to change soon. Waiting would not serve them well for much longer.

When the commotion started, Kingsley was one of the first on his feet — it was lunch time, and he'd been sat with Sirius and Narcissa, reading over a letter from Andi sent by way of