

He couldn't take another Cedric, not so soon.

"Yeah. Yeah, I just... I was supposed to be here. Someone who wants me dead knows where I live." Clearly Dumbledore's fabled protections weren't all they were cracked up to be. How had none of his guard not noticed what was going on? A dementor was pretty easy to identify!

He opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off by the doorbell ringing once more. His heart dropped to his stomach. "That might be the Ministry. I need to go."

"Be careful," Draco urged. "Call me back when you can."

Harry cut the connection, slipping the mirror back in his pocket and keeping his wrist poised to remove his wand from his holster. He hurried downstairs, peeking through the window to see two men in robes. One was an auror, with the crest displayed on his chest; the other had plain black robes, and was stocky and narrow-eyed. Harry hoped for the neighbours' sake they had Notice-Me-Not charms up; the gossip hounds of Privet Drive would have *definitely* noticed the police presence at Number 4.

Harry opened the door, warily eyeing the two wizards in front of him.

"Mr Potter," the auror greeted with a nod. Harry realised it was the same man who had come to help arrest Rita Skeeter. Shacklebolt, wasn't it? He was an Order member! Sirius and the others had talked about him, he was sure of it. "I'm Auror Shacklebolt, and this is Mr Runcorn from the Misuse of Magic Department. May we come in?"

"I haven't used any magic," Harry blurted. Shacklebolt cracked a half-smile.

"We know, Mr Potter."

Harry stepped aside to let them in. Runcorn was scowling, a look of distaste on his face as he eyed the blatantly muggle hallway, the pictures of the Dursleys on the walls. "We won't be long," he said curtly, looking like he'd rather be anywhere else. "We simply need to know your whereabouts this evening."

"I've been home all day," Harry replied. It hit him suddenly that he probably wasn't supposed to know about what happened to Dudley. "What's going on? The police were here, they said my cousin was in hospital or something. Was... was it magic related?"

He watched Shacklebolt's face grow grim. "It was, I'm sorry to say. I don't know how to tell you this, Mr Potter, but earlier this evening a dementor found its way to Wisteria Walk, and attacked your cousin on his way home. He... he was Kissed. I'm sorry."

"*Found its way?*" Harry repeated, unable to help himself. "Like it was just *wandering* about? I thought dementors were supposed to stay in Azkaban!"

"It's none of your business what the dementors are doing," Runcorn snapped.

"It is if they're sucking the soul out of my cousin!" Harry argued. Shacklebolt held out a placating hand.