

“Likelihood is, they’ve disabled the floo and put anti-apparition wards up,” Tonks declared, her face more serious than most would expect of her. She closed her eyes and spun slightly, face screwed up in concentration. “Yeah, no dice. Shit.” Sirius’ stomach sank; if even she, as an auror, couldn’t get through the wards...

“How far do the wards extend?” Fred Weasley asked, another unexpectedly serious face in the mix.

“Half-mile radius,” Kingsley informed them. “That’s our standard wards, at least. No idea if they’ve raised their own or just triggered the existing.”

The twins bent their heads together, discussing it over quickly.

“St James’ Park station should do it, right?”

Sirius thought over his mental map of London, trying to poke his ragged memories from the Before times for anything he might have been told about the Ministry wards threshold. Back then they had been warned of it, in case the wards had to be raised in an attack and back-up had to approach from elsewhere.

“Waterloo,” Tonks piped up. “I was always taught Waterloo.”

“Anyone here never been to Waterloo station before?” Sirius asked, his fingers tapping his thigh impatiently. Several hands rose, Charlie’s included. “Right. Buddy up, we need to get moving.”

“We can’t just rush in there!” Jones started, and Sirius turned on her, glaring.

“Harry is in danger!” he roared. “Every extra second is crucial. It’s already gonna take enough time to bloody run from Waterloo to Whitehall.”

That shut the woman up, and there was a mild amount of chaos as everyone hurried to find an apparition partner. Sirius wasn’t surprised when Charlie grabbed his hand, the redhead winking at him and stepping incredibly close. “I’m with you,” he murmured.

“Oh, I’d best stay here — wait for Albus, you know,” Molly was fretting off to the side, and Sirius looked up at Charlie, squeezing his hand back. Molly hadn’t figured them out yet — Bill hadn’t gotten the nerve to propose yet — but every day Sirius cared less and less. After his Patronus revelation, he cared especially little right now.

He wound an arm around Charlie’s waist, offering a grin. “Hold on tight.”

Then they were squeezing together through space, gone in an instant and back again just as fast. Sirius looked around, quietly delighted that he’d actually remembered Waterloo well enough to apparate there. It had been fifteen years, after all.

They had appeared in a dingy side-street, and a few moments later Bill and Hestia appeared. Before he forgot, Sirius pulled his two-way mirror from his pocket, calling Harry’s name again. Part of him hoped for an answer, but the bigger part knew there was not one coming; Harry was not in a position to chat.