

dozens of people, most of whom the general public would swear up and down were Death Eaters — some of whom were even Marked, but Narcissa did not judge. She knew better than most what it was like to have no real choice at all.

With Dumbledore out of the way, he'd finally been able to break and reset the Fidelius on Grimmauld Place, with Remus as the Secret Keeper this time. When a pair of healers asked for refuge, Grimmauld quickly became the place for the trusted members of the Order to bring those who had been injured trying to flee, who needed somewhere safe to recover. Most days, Sirius was there, helping the healers the best he could.

Charlie helped where he could, bless his enormous Weasley heart. With the dragon reserve on high alert, he did his best to bring healing supplies to Grimmauld when he could — the reserve had its own greenhouses for ingredients used in the most common remedies, as it liked to be as self-sufficient as possible. Sirius didn't see his partner nearly as often as he'd like these days, despite the reserve only actually being perhaps twenty miles away from Seren Du itself. They had to be careful about moving through the wards, now that Voldemort had control of the Ministry and its ability to track magic use throughout the British Isles. More than once, Sirius had seen dark cloaked figures skulking about the woods on the other side of the Seren Du wardline, muttering about having seen apparition signatures in the area.

Luckily, Ceri was always good to aid with transportation, and very few wizards had thought to design wards to track or deny elf magic.

At the sound of the front door opening, Sirius straightened up — he was at Grimmauld again, waiting for Charlie and Fred to return with a group of muggleborns Kingsley had tipped them off about. They hadn't had new attacks to fend off in a while — either Voldemort had run out, or he had bigger plans to focus on now — so most of their work was just finding people who needed safety.

He hurried into the main hall, skidding to a halt in the doorway, jaw dropping.

Kingsley hadn't said they were *children*.

The two redheads each held a child on their hip, around six or seven years old. At their feet stood three more kids, all of whom looked old enough to be at Hogwarts. "What happened?" Sirius pressed. "Where are their parents?"

The tallest child, a spindly-limbed boy that reminded him painfully of the first time he'd ever seen Harry, storming out of the Dursleys' looking like he hadn't eaten in months, scoffed.

"Haven't had those for a long while, sir," he replied mulishly.

"We've been on our own since the summer," the auburn-haired girl beside him explained, softer, her eyes full of apology for the boy's attitude. "When my parents — they're muggles — found out about the war, they pulled me out of Hogwarts and decided that was that, I was done with the whole magic business. But I knew it wouldn't be that simple — not with my address on record at the Ministry. Not since the twins started doing accidental magic of their own." She glanced up at the kids still held by the Weasley brothers. Sirius could see the family resemblance. "When muggleborn families started getting targeted, I figured it