

As soon as they were gone, Harry and Hermione about tripped over themselves trying to tell the whole story all at once.

“It is your turn to listen,” Dumbledore spoke over them, raising a hand. “There’s no time to interrupt. There is not a shred of proof that Sirius Black is an innocent man, as you say he is. The only two adults involved are currently unavailable, and by the time they can tell their story it will be too late. Cornelius will not wait around on the word of two thirteen year-olds. It’s too late, do you hear me?”

Harry glared at the old man— how could he just let Sirius die? Was he that desperate to keep control of Harry?

“But you believe us?” Hermione pressed.

“What I believe is neither here nor there,” Dumbledore told her. “I was not present, therefore I have no power. I cannot overrule the Minister for Magic.” It took all of Harry’s effort to hold back a derisive snort; as if Dumbledore didn’t overrule the Minister all the time. “What we need is *more time*.” He placed a strange emphasis on the words, and Hermione gasped. “Now listen closely. Sirius Black is being held in Professor Flitwick’s office. Seventh floor, thirteenth window from the right of the West Tower. If all goes well, you should be able to save two innocent lives tonight.”

Harry had officially lost the plot of the conversation, but Hermione was nodding as if the headmaster made total sense. “I am going to lock you in,” Dumbledore announced, straightening up. It is—“ he checked his watch “— five minutes to midnight. Three turns should do it. Good luck.”

“Good luck?” Harry mumbled, utterly perplexed as the door closed. “What the... Hermione, what was he talking about?” She seemed to know exactly what Dumbledore was getting at.

“Harry, come here,” Hermione urged, reaching into her robes and pulling out some sort of pendant on a very long, fine gold chain. Harry crossed the gap between their beds. The pendant was a tiny, sparkling hourglass. “Closer.” Hermione threw the chain around his neck, too, her movements a little awkward thanks to her tightly-splinted wrist.

“What is that, Hermione?” Harry asked with trepidation. The bushy-haired girl smiled breathlessly.

“Just trust me. Ready?”

Harry nodded. Hermione turned the hourglass over three times, and suddenly the ward around them dissolved. The world was nothing but a blur of colour and shapes around him, his blood rushing in his ears — and then it stopped, and he was on solid ground again. In the middle of the deserted Entrance Hall... in daylight?

Before he could speak, Hermione had him by the arm and was dragging him into a nearby broom cupboard. She removed the chain from his neck, stuffing the hourglass back in her robes. “What the hell just happened?” Harry asked in a furious whisper.