

about, and a few rubber ducks — some of which exploded into soap bubbles when touched.

Harry blinked. Then shook his head, turned around, and decided to use a Parseltongue passage instead.

The Chamber of Secrets was blessedly quiet, but Harry didn't stay long, heading straight for the wall that would take him to Snape's office. Thankfully, the man was inside, and he jumped to his feet at Harry's entrance. "Potter!" He rushed forward, gripping Harry by the shoulders. "When did you get here? What happened?"

Suddenly, Harry was hit by a wave of exhaustion, the entire day's events crashing into him at once. He swayed forward, forehead resting on Snape's thin chest. "The Ministry is safe. We captured a bunch of Death Eaters, and Fudge saw Voldemort in the flesh. And Lucius Malfoy is dead." Snape tensed at that last declaration. "Dumbledore's talking to Fudge now, he forced a portkey on me. I don't know where Neville and the others are." With any luck they had been moved to the Hospital Wing, or at least away from the Ministry.

Fingers gently gripped his chin, and Snape tilted his head up, looking him in the eye. "Let me in," he urged, and Harry didn't have the energy to argue. He welcomed the man's Legilimency, shoving the memories of the whole evening his way. He wasn't sure how long they were stood like that, how much real time passed while Harry sent flashes of the last five hours, but eventually Snape pulled away. Then, to Harry's surprise, the dour Potions Master pulled him into a hug.

"You bloody marvel, Potter," he declared, and Harry laughed.

"Wasn't just me. The others helped too." They had been so amazing, so much better than he'd ever imagined.

Snape smirked lightly. "Indeed. I could spend the rest of my life re-watching the memory of Rabastan getting his wand snapped before his own eyes, and I would die a very happy man."

Harry grinned; Ginny had done that, once she'd got the man tied up by his own robes. Then she'd punched him in the face to break his nose before Stunning him unconscious. It was brilliant.

"I don't know what to tell Dumbledore," he blurted.

"He will need to know at least some of the truth. The Heads' paintings will tell him you accessed your family magic to get out."

Harry blushed sheepishly; perhaps that had been a little foolish, yes, but he had just felt so *trapped*.

"He can't find me here," he realised all of a sudden. Snape nodded.

"I have been down here waiting to hear word — and ignoring the rebellion, quite frankly," he added, incredulity touching his voice. "But from what I have heard through the house elves,