

Harry grimaced, but didn't say anything. That wasn't a discussion he wanted to get into when he had the task facing him in a few hours.

"Hey, Mum," Bill cut in when lunch began to wind down. "Mind if I borrow Harry for a minute? Give him a bit of advice before the task? Man-to-man, y'know."

Mrs Weasley smiled and nodded, shooing them away. Bill led Harry with a hand on his shoulder out of the hall and into a small classroom, locking the door with an impressive set of wards. Harry supposed he *was* a curse-breaker. "I spoke to Charlie after the first task," Bill said, leaning against a nearby desk. "He told me everything. Merlin, Harry... I'm sorry about Mum."

"It's not your fault," Harry insisted automatically. "I'm... I'm trying not to think about it, to be honest. I think Ron and Hermione are under his thumb, too."

Bill didn't look surprised. "I had a feeling that might be the case. Bollocks. Well, you've got the rest of us Weasleys. Not sure where Dad stands on the matter, mind. Haven't really asked him, just in case." Harry was happy to let Mr Weasley remain oblivious, and said as much. "Now, like I said, I spoke to Gorrak back before Christmas. He mentioned a very unique case of dark magic residue on a high-profile client that he might be putting me to work on this summer. From your letter, can I assume that's you?"

"Bingo," Harry confirmed with a grimace. "Did Charlie tell you about the magic Gorrak already removed from me?" From the way Bill's lips pursed, Harry took that as a yes. "The scar is different; he said he'd never seen anything like it. It also turns out it gives me a direct link into Voldemort's head, so that's not great."

Bill's face turned horrified, and Harry gave him the cliff-notes of his visions from Voldemort. "Blimey, Harry," Bill murmured, shaking his head. "That's one hell of a curse residue. Mind if I give you a scan?"

With Harry's consent, Bill spent the next five minutes checking him over with various spells, muttering under his breath and writing things down in a little muggle notebook he pulled from his pocket. "I swear I've seen something like this before," he murmured, putting the notebook away. "The magic feels familiar, somehow. It's hard to explain," he added at Harry's bewildered look. "I'll look into it and hopefully get you some answers soon. That's not magic you want sitting on you any longer than it has to be."

"It's so mixed up with my core, it hardly feels like foreign magic, to be honest," Harry admitted, remembering how awful it felt when Dumbledore reapplied the Compulsion charm once he was aware of his core. Sure, if he poked at it it felt a little wonky, but otherwise the magic around his scar just felt like an extension of his own, which was a terrifying prospect.

"That's not unusual; it's been part of you for almost your whole life. It practically *is* yours, now." Bill hummed thoughtfully, then pocketed his wand, clapping Harry on the shoulder. "Come on, then; let's get you back to Mum before she comes looking for us. You can take us up to Gryffindor, I'd love to say hello to the Fat Lady."