

quick, humourless smile flitted beneath his bristly moustache. “I understand the culprit has been identified. I... let me know if you need more, won’t you?”

Slughorn folded the vial into her palm, patting her closed fingers gently. Then he cast sad eyes in Hannah’s direction. “If there’s anything I can do to help the poor girl — more Skele-Gro, or— I have contacts at St Mungo’s. If it’s safe to send her over. Just... whatever you need, don’t hesitate to ask.”

The ageing Potions Master gave a helpless little shrug, then quietly left the Hospital Wing.

Harry didn’t argue when Amelia took Kingsley and Tonks to go find Terry for questioning. He may be somewhat of a leader in this rag-tag rebellion they had pulled together, but in any other circumstances this would be a Ministry matter, and he was still just a student.

More than that, Harry didn’t *want* to watch Terry’s questioning. He didn’t want to sit there and listen to a boy he’d shared classes with for six years declare his allegiance to the man who was trying to destroy everything he held dear. He didn’t want to hear who else was involved, or what Terry had been asked to do by Voldemort. He would find out the details sooner or later.

He already had so many burdens on his shoulders by the very nature of this war. He didn’t want to add another.

A thin-fingered hand slipped into his, and he blinked away his dark thoughts, meeting concerned grey eyes. Draco led him over to a quiet corner, away from Susan and Ernie’s quiet vigil at Hannah’s side.

“How is she really?” Harry asked, keeping his voice low. Draco sighed.

“It’s bad,” he admitted. Harry’s stomach sank. “I’ve only read about this curse — I knew the counter, but I’d never done it. And the time it took me to identify it... it hit her right in the spine. The curse got halfway to her shoulders and down through most of her pelvis before Pomfrey and I could stop it.” He was stark white, hand clenching tight around Harry’s. Bile rose in Harry’s throat — that was a *lot* of bone to be damaged.

“But... it can be grown back, right? Once the dark magic is filtered out?” He only knew bits and pieces of healing theory from listening to Draco, but he knew that the thing that made dark curses so dangerous wasn’t the effect itself, but the dark magic that lingered in the affected area and prevented healing. That had to be dealt with before anything could truly be fixed.

“We got her stabilised,” Draco said. “Poppy’s said we’ll get Uncle Sev up here to help — he knows dark magic scrubbing far better than I do. The Skele-Gro won’t set while it’s still a cursed injury, but it’ll grow enough to keep everything in place. We hope.” He swallowed tightly. “She... Hannah probably won’t be able to walk again. It’s possible, of course, with time and therapy and the right course of potions. It would be *more* possible if we could get a specialist from St Mungo’s out to see her, but... this is what we’ve got.” The tense line of his shoulders crumpled, ever so slightly. “Harry, if I’d just been faster, if I’d—“