

The Battle of Hogwarts

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The Battle of Hogwarts

by [melian225](#)

Summary

The Battle of Hogwarts wasn't just one story. Here, fourteen participants tell theirs.

Notes

This is a collection of fourteen one-shots I wrote as part of the 2010 HPFF House Cup, all detailing an aspect of the Battle of Hogwarts from a different perspective. Some are fairly straightforward; others not so much; and canon compliance may be stretched in a couple of cases. Either way, I hope you enjoy them.

Taking the plunge

Chapter Summary

Ron Weasley

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Jasmine (Blueirony) for her beta work on this chapter.

Ron and Hermione looked at each other incredulously. Had Harry just told them to stay put in the Room of Requirement while he went out in search of the lost diadem of Ravenclaw? After everything they'd been through together, it seemed astonishing that he was still trying to protect them, to do everything himself.

"He's mental," Ron said, "if he seriously thinks we're just going to sit here and wait for him."

Hermione nodded, her face grim. "But what can we do? I mean, really? We have to find the diadem, but beyond that ... And even if we do find it, how are we going to destroy it?"

"Basilisk venom, of course," Ron said with a smile, amazed that someone as smart as Hermione hadn't thought of that.

She looked confused. "But we don't have the sword of Gryffindor anymore," she pointed out. "And where else are we going to find" Her voice trailed off and her eyes got very wide. "*The Chamber??*"

"Where else?" Ron asked briskly. "We can destroy the cup while we're waiting for Harry to find the diadem, right? Come on, let's find Myrtle's bathroom." And, grabbing her arm, he picked up Helga Hufflepuff's Cup and started to lead her out of the room. Suddenly, though, he paused.

Hermione looked at him. "What's wrong?"

"We'll need a broom," Ron said, thinking furiously. Where might he find a spare broom in the next few seconds? Fortunately, though, the Room pre-empted him and he saw one leaning against the wall by the exit door. "Perfect," he said with a grin, picking it up. "Come on, let's go."

"What do we need that for?" Hermione asked, her eyes on the broom.

“To get out again. We had Fawkes last time, but I somehow don’t think he’s likely to drop in again just to give us a lift.”

The Room of Requirement let them out by a bunch of disused classrooms on the fifth floor, so they had to find their way down three flights of stairs, clutching the Cup and trying to keep out of the way of anyone who could try to stop them. Finally, after what felt like an hour, they made it.

“Weird, isn’t it?” Ron said conversationally as they wandered down the deserted corridor. “Everywhere else is in chaos but there’s no one anywhere near here. It’s almost like they know it’s the entrance to the Chamber and want to avoid it just in case the basilisk comes back out.”

“But that’s ridiculous,” Hermione pointed out. “Everyone knows that Harry killed the basilisk back in second year. Why would they be worried about it coming out now?”

Ron shrugged. “Basilisks are weird creatures. People believe all sorts of things about them, so I wouldn’t be surprised if coming back from the dead was one of them. Ah, here we are.”

They stopped outside the door, both thinking of their second year when they had brewed Polyjuice Potion in this very bathroom, dodging the ghost of Myrtle in their quest to find out who the Heir of Slytherin was. Hermione looked at Ron.

“Um – Ron, how are we going to get in?” she asked. “Harry’s not here, and neither of us can speak Parseltongue.”

“I’ll do it,” Ron said, sounding more confident than he felt. “I’ve heard Harry say it loads of times. I’ll see if I can’t say it like he does.” He smiled at her incredulous face. “Hey, it might work. It’s worth a shot, don’t you think?”

“I suppose we can try,” Hermione said doubtfully. “Well, here goes nothing.”

They pushed open the door and Ron quickly found the tap with the snake engraved on it. He was pleased that he knew what he was looking for because, as they had noticed all those years before, if you weren’t looking for it you’d never see it.

Ron stared at the snake and made a strangled, hissing sound that he thought sounded roughly like Harry had when he’d opened the locket. The tap did nothing. Undaunted, he tried again. It took several goes but eventually he managed to get the right hissing noise and, amazingly, he and Hermione saw the Chamber open up.

Hermione looked at him. “Ron! You did it!” There was admiration in her eyes and for a split second he allowed himself to think that, maybe, there was a chance for him after all. However, this was not the time to lapse back into those dreams. Shaking his head at himself a little gruffly, he reached for her hand.

“You ready?”

She nodded. She looked frightened, and he realised all of a sudden that she had never been down this chute before, that when he and Harry had done it in second year she had been lying in the hospital wing, Petrified. "It's okay," he said reassuringly. "Just a long slide and the landing's not that bad. A few bones and things but nothing dangerous."

She bit her lip and swallowed, looking determined. "Well, let's go, then."

One by one, they launched themselves down the slide. It was horrible and slimy and smelled revolting, but they did it. After what seemed an age, Ron landed with a thud on the cold floor of the Chamber's entrance, littered with ancient rats' skeletons and dust.

Lighting his wand, he hurried to get up so that Hermione wouldn't land on him when she exited the chute – while he would have loved to catch her, he suspected that being as lanky and bony as he was, it would probably be even less comfortable for her than landing on the floor would.

The tunnel they landed in was dark and slimy and Hermione looked slightly revolted as Ron helped her to stand. "THIS is the Chamber?" she asked, also lighting her wand and looking around disparagingly. "I would have thought Salazar Slytherin would have made it more comfortable."

"It's just the entrance," Ron said. "We go down the tunnel and apparently the Chamber opens up further on. I guess we can leave the broom here until we need to get out ..." He leaned it against the wall just by the chute exit, hoping that nothing would go wrong and that it would still be there when they needed it.

Hermione looked at him, seemingly having not heard his last sentence. "What do you mean, apparently? Haven't you been here before?"

"Yeah," Ron agreed, "but I never got further than ..." His voice trailed off until they rounded a corner and came to the rock fall that had stopped him five years earlier. "Than here," he said. "This was where Lockhart Obliviated himself, the git, so I stayed here to make sure he didn't do anything stupid, and Harry ..."

His voice trailed off again, but Hermione knew what he meant. "And Harry went on through," she finished for him.

"He didn't have much choice," Ron admitted, "because he was on the other side of the rock wall. All I could do was try to dig out a hole big enough for him to get back through, and Ginny." He paused, remembering how that had felt, how he hadn't known if he would ever see his sister alive again. It had been one of the most awful feelings of his life.

"Well, then," Hermione was saying, "let's go." She was already climbing over the fallen rocks by the time he'd realised what she'd said.

On the other side of the rock wall, Ron looked around with interest. Now he knew that there was no danger here, that he wasn't about to die just by looking at a giant snake, the place didn't seem as creepy as it had before. Then again, he was five years older now and that had

to count for something, didn't it? Grabbing Hermione's hand instinctively, he walked with her down the tunnel.

Finally, it ended, and they were faced with a solid wall engraved with serpent carvings, the emeralds in their eyes glistening in the wandlight. They stopped, still holding hands, and Hermione looked at him expectantly.

"Can you do it again?" she whispered.

He cleared his throat, the noise sounding loud and echoing off the walls around them. Once more he attempted the Parseltongue impersonation, making the strange hissing sound that Harry did so well.

On the third try, the wall opened for him. Holding Hermione's hand far more tightly than he'd intended, he led her into the Chamber itself.

Even though he'd heard Harry's and Ginny's descriptions of the place, nothing really prepared him for the sheer immensity of it. Stone pillars lined the long, narrow chamber, and from the wand light he could see the faint image of a statue way up ahead.

"That must be Slytherin himself," he muttered, feeling somewhat comforted by the fact that Hermione was still holding his hand just as tightly as he was holding hers.

"And that must be the ... the basilisk," Hermione whispered. Huge and decayed, the skin and skeleton of a huge snake was piled up around the foot of the great statue. Ron couldn't imagine how Harry must have felt, as a twelve year old, having to face this alive. "We are sure it's safe, aren't we?"

"We should be," Ron said, more reassuringly than he felt. Even though at an intellectual level he knew that nothing here would hurt them, the Chamber's dank smell and eerie atmosphere, combined with the remains of one of the deadliest creatures known to wizardkind, meant that he couldn't completely expel the doubts from his own mind, no matter how confident and at ease he had felt a minute or so previously. "The basilisk only kills if it sees you, right? Well, that thing isn't seeing anything. I can't imagine how we could be in danger."

Slowly, cautiously, they approached the beast. "Do you think the venom will still be good?" Hermione asked tentatively. "I've read that basilisk venom can last for years under the right conditions, but ..."

"I guess there's only one way to find out," Ron said grimly. He grabbed a fang from the snake's skull and gave it a pull, and it came out far more easily than he'd anticipated. Holding it at arm's length, he looked at Hermione. "Do you want to do the honours?"

She looked taken aback. "Me?"

"Yes, you," Ron said, dropping her hand and fishing inside his jacket for the Cup. "I've already done one, I think it's your turn now."

Hermione took the fang doubtfully. "Are you sure? I thought ..."

“You should do it,” Ron insisted, putting the Cup on the floor in front of her. “Come on, it’s not hard. Just stab it with the fang.”

Taking a deep breath, Hermione took the fang and looked at the Cup. He could tell she was a bit torn between wanting to kill the Horcrux it contained, and destroying such a valuable and historical artefact, but unfortunately it couldn’t be avoided. “Okay,” she said, sounding like she was trying to talk herself into doing it, “here I go.”

Shutting her eyes, she thrust the fang down on the Cup with all her power. Unfortunately, because she closed her eyes, she missed, and hit the stone floor a few inches to the right. “Oh,” she said, clearly disappointed, as she opened her eyes. “I missed, didn’t I?”

“Just try again,” Ron said encouragingly. “Even if you break the fang, there are a stack more here we can use.”

“Right.” She gazed at the Cup again and took aim once more. This time, she kept her eyes open, and with a loud CLANG, the fang and cup collided. There was a long, drawn-out scream as the Horcrux met its end, and an ugly dark stain appeared on the mangled remains of the Cup.

Hermione looked up at him, breathless and pale. “Was that it?”

Ron nodded grimly. “Looks like it,” he said. “And you got it better than I did. When I went to stab the locket, it kept talking to me, showing me things. It was awful.”

She dropped the basilisk fang and took his hand, and he realised that he’d never spoken to her about the locket and what it had tormented him with. Maybe she understood anyway.

“It feels wrong, destroying something that belonged to one of the Founders,” Hermione said after a while, breaking the silence and changing the subject. “I wish he hadn’t used these things.”

“Makes them more powerful, doesn’t it?” Ron said simply. “He wanted to live forever, he probably figured that people would be like you and wouldn’t want to wreck something that old.” Reluctantly dropping her hand, he went back over to the basilisk and started wrenching teeth from the skull.

“What are you doing?” Hermione asked.

He shrugged. “We’ve got at least one more Horcrux to kill, right?” he asked. “Well, we might as well make sure we’ve got the means to do it.”

“Of course,” she said quietly, still looking a little pale, and he wondered if the Cup had in fact said something to her, tormenting her as the locket had tormented him. He wondered if he would ever know.

“Come on,” he said bracingly, giving her an armful of fangs. “Grab as many as you can and we’ll get out of here. Harry could have found the diadem by now and he’ll be wanting to destroy it.”

Between them they gathered up as many teeth as they could comfortably hold, considering they had to carry the mangled Cup and hold onto a broomstick in order to leave the Chamber. Then, picking their way over the remains of the basilisk and the bones of its many snacks over the years, they made their way back to the bottom of the chute.

“Harry should be thrilled,” said Hermione, sounding much more confident and like her usual self now they were out of the Chamber proper. Ron looked at her, concerned that maybe it had had some impact on her that he hadn’t realised, but took heart in the fact that the colour was returning to her cheeks. “Another Horcrux gone, and the means to destroy the diadem when we find it.”

He noted the use of the word “when” rather than “if” and smiled as he set the broom up ready for her to climb on. “Yeah, when we find it,” he agreed. “Now, are you ready to go back up? Heaven only knows what’s been going on since we left.”

Hermione looked determined, one arm clutching at the broom handle and the other full of yellowing teeth. “Yes, let’s go,” she said. “Harry might need us.”

Taking a deep breath himself, Ron swung himself onto the broom, making sure that he had the cup, the fangs AND control of the broom. Hermione put her spare arm around his waist and he smiled again. “Yes, let’s go,” he echoed, pushing off and heading back up the chute. “We’ve got a war to win.”

The prodigal son

Chapter Summary

Percy Weasley

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Text in bold is dialogue taken directly from page 487 of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, UK edition hardcover.

Thanks to CessZ for beta-ing this one-shot.

Percy Weasley felt uncomfortable.

It had been coming on for weeks – no, months – when the Ministry had started on its campaign of “Magic is Might”. Percy had always believed in authority and was most comfortable when provided with a solid set of rules to follow, but the rules themselves had gradually become more and more unviable. Unviable, that is, to any witch or wizard with a conscience.

Making a registry of Muggle-borns? Fine, he could deal with that. It was another census of the magical population and required forms to be filled in correctly and lower-ranked staff to be pulled into line to ensure they conformed. He had felt less comfortable at the trials of these Muggle-borns, though, where they had been asked to identify how they had stolen their magical ability.

Still, though, it was a job, and a good job at that. The way he’d been going, moving up the ranks due to his dedication and hard work, it was looking like he’d be his father’s boss in no time.

But still, his conscience had started to protest. Not against his abandonment of his family – while not as convinced as he had once been, he still thought he had made the right decision, though his mother’s obvious heartbreak did cut at him a little – but against the more strident decisions of the current Minister, Pius Thicknesse. Even with the *Daily Prophet* onside, it was getting more and more obvious, even to the general wizarding public, that his orders were being written by Death Eaters.

He looked around his flat. It was sparsely furnished – he only went there to sleep and shower, really, as most of his time awake was spent at work. There was the wireless in the corner that

he'd been using to track *Potterwatch* over the past few months, and maybe the ingredients for one meagre meal in the cupboard, but that was about it. He had never had a visitor to his home, never entertained or even opened the door to a salesperson. Even Penelope had never been here ... his thirst for professional advancement had meant that his relationship with her had hit the skids long ago. Thinking about it, he had sacrificed all his relationships for his work – lost everyone who had once been important to him. And for what? For a Minister who was now, obviously, at least to him, in the employ of Lord Voldemort.

Percy had a feeling that something would be happening soon. He had been keeping an ear out for *Potterwatch* recently, allowing himself to smile at the sound of his brother's voice and listening to what the resistance were doing. (They didn't refer to the Order any more, probably because its leader, Albus Dumbledore, was dead. Perhaps the Death Eaters had wanted to believe that the Order was now finished with – he had never really thought about that before.) And he had felt less and less inclined to report what he'd learned to his superiors at work, because somewhere, deep in his heart, he was starting to feel an affinity with the resistance himself. However, finding a way to fight the Ministry was difficult, not least because traitors – whether proven or not – were being imprisoned with such speed and regularity that it was difficult to keep up.

A month before, he had managed to break free for long enough to make contact with someone he believed was working for the resistance, in as much as Aberforth Dumbledore worked for anyone. The hair on the back of his neck standing up, Percy was sure that he and Aberforth would talk again soon. It was difficult to communicate, of course, as the Floo network was being watched (even for trusted Ministry employees such as himself), but they had been using Patronuses to get the occasional message back and forth.

Yes, he thought, surely he would hear something soon. There was a chill in the air and he couldn't shake the feeling that something important would be happening shortly. Maybe even tonight.

Sure enough, it was less than an hour later that the familiar goat appeared in front of him, drifting in through the window he had left open to get the breeze in. Though early May, it was surprisingly stuffy in London, even with the Dementors around, and any air flow was better than none. (At least, that was what he had told his boss that morning when his open window had been brought up as a potential security risk. That, and he never took any work home anyway so even if a resistance member DID get in, they wouldn't find anything anyway.)

"Troops gathering at Hogwarts," the goat said in Aberforth's grunting voice. "Prepare to fight."

Percy sprang into action. Not even thinking about whether he should try to disguise his intent – that would be clear enough very soon anyway – he grabbed a travelling cloak and his wand, made sure his glasses were on straight, and Disapparated to Aberforth's pub in Hogsmeade.

The landlord nodded at him as he arrived, and he took that to mean his presence was appreciated. "You're the Weasley kid?" he asked gruffly.

"Percy Weasley. Pleased to meet you," Percy said quickly, offering a hand to shake.

The barman didn't take it. "Don't waste time with that, get upstairs," he hissed. "Sitting room. I'll be there shortly."

Heading up the motheaten carpet on the stairs, Percy soon found the right room and sat in an old armchair that had the stuffing coming out in places. A few minutes later, Aberforth joined him.

"Sorry to kick you out like that but the front bar is a bit of a haven for Death Eaters," he said.

Percy was surprised. "Death Eaters? Here?"

The barman nodded. "They need somewhere to traffick their stolen goods, don't they?" he grunted. "I turn a blind eye and they don't pry into my business either." It was clear that this part of the conversation was over but Percy understood – Aberforth was just doing what he needed to in order to get by in this new world. Over the past few months, Percy had been doing the same thing himself.

"Uh – how do I get into Hogwarts from here?" he asked tentatively. Even he wasn't naive enough to believe that he could just march in through the front gates.

"Through here," Aberforth said gruffly, indicating a portrait above the fireplace in which a passageway now appeared. "They're all going through the tunnel to fight. If you get a move on you'll catch the last of 'em."

"Great, thanks," Percy said eagerly, not even baulking at the thought of walking into a painting. This was clearly the way to Hogwarts at the moment, at least without being caught, and if nothing else it certainly beat standing in a toilet and flushing oneself in. Taking a deep breath and clutching his wand tightly, he stepped into the tunnel.

He didn't know what he really expected to find at the other end. Hogwarts under siege, perhaps, or even the Dark Lord himself. What he didn't expect was to find himself, covered in dust and his glasses askew, face to face with almost all of his family. The people he had cut himself off from were the first ones to witness his repentance, and the significance of this fact didn't escape him.

The tension in the room – and what room was this? He didn't remember having been here in all his seven years at Hogwarts – was palpable and remained even through a blatant attempt to break the tension by Fleur Delacour. (Delacour? Or Weasley? Had she married his brother or was he remembering wrong? He wasn't sure.) Finally, after some garbled confessions and admissions of his own stupidity, which took less of an effort than he'd been anticipating, it dissipated and his mother, tears in her eyes, crossed the room and hugged him so tightly that he wondered if he might crack a rib or two. The biggest apology, though, the one that he knew that he had to make before he said anything else, was still before him.

Over his mother's shoulder, Percy sought out his father and looked him in the eye. **"I'm sorry, Dad."** It didn't feel like much but it was all he could get out (physically as well as emotionally – his mother still had a very tight grip on him and he was almost struggling for breath) and he hoped that his father understood how much was contained in those three words. From the look on the older man's face, he thought he did.

Finally, it seemed like enough had been said, or expressed, and his return to his family was complete. Odd that it had to take place under such difficult circumstances – with a war raging outside the room they were sequestered in – but he was pleased it had finally taken place. Some things, he realised, were too valuable to lose, and family was one of them.

Before long he found himself following Fred, George, Bill and Fleur out into the castle. The room the tunnel came out in was evidently on the fourth floor, and they made their way down to the Great Hall where it appeared everyone was congregating as a plan was worked out. Automatically moving towards the Gryffindor table, where they had sat for so many years, they found some room and sat down, awaiting orders.

As he sat and waited, looking at the huge number of nervous teenagers huddled together at their House tables, he thought about what he'd done. While he had been surreptitious in his resistance activities before – the little things like NOT reporting *Potterwatch* – this was beyond the point of no return. No matter what else happened, he had been confirmed as a resistance fighter now, and he knew that his cushy job at the Ministry was a thing of the past. No matter what happened here tonight, he would no longer work for Pius Thicknesse.

“What’s up, Perce?” Fred asked amiably. “You’re looking almost thoughtful, and we all know that’s not like you in the slightest.”

“Oh, just thinking about work,” Percy said honestly. “I suspect I won’t have a job after tonight ... I might have to move back home.”

“Well, Mum won’t mind that at all,” George assured him with a grin. “She’s dying for someone to baby, what with Ginny at school, Ron off gallivanting around the countryside doing whatever, and Fred and me living in London.”

“I never did make it into your shop, did I?” Percy mused. “I wanted to. I went past so many times, but I couldn’t bring myself to face you.”

“Never too late,” Fred said, clapping him on the shoulder. “Drop by next week and we’ll fit you out with all the ... oh, wait, it’s you, Perce, isn’t it? Maybe what we sell isn’t really your cup of tea.”

“I can take a joke,” Percy said defensively. “I can even make jokes, sometimes.” He paused, taking in the twins’ incredulous faces. “Not often, mind, but sometimes,” he clarified.

Fred laughed, just as the rest of the Weasleys (minus Ron) joined them at the Gryffindor table and Professor McGonagall started telling the congregation where things stood. “You, joke?” he asked. “You don’t remember how to joke, do you? I reckon I’ll only believe that when I see it.”

They were interrupted by the cold, high voice of Lord Voldemort penetrating the hall, offering a deal – the safety of the school, in return for Harry Potter. Percy knew that deal would never happen – even if Harry did give himself up, which Percy saw as highly unlikely, the school would probably be attacked anyway. Voldemort was like that. Taking a deep breath and sticking out his chest like he used to when he was Head Boy, he looked around at his family.

“This is it, isn’t it? Fight or flight?”

Around him, underage students (and a number who were old enough but chose not to fight) were being shepherded out of the Great Hall, leaving behind only those who were prepared to risk everything in the school’s defence.

“Too right it is,” George said with a grin. “So, Percy my friend, what’ll it be?”

Percy, though knowing it was asked in jest, managed to look insulted at the very suggestion that his bravery would falter at this critical point. He had not risked everything in order to come here tonight and then flee at the first sign of danger. “You’re asking me that? I thought you were supposed to be smart!” He looked around at his family, his gaze resting on his father, who was looking old, tired, yet determined. “I’m with the rest of you. I’m ready to do what it takes.”

“Great to hear,” Bill said, beaming at him. “We need as many fighters as we can get. This won’t be easy.”

Percy nodded grimly and adjusted his glasses. “Well, count me in.” He paused, taking another deep breath, and started to prepare himself for what was to come. “I’m ready.”

Paladin

Chapter Summary

Arthur Weasley

Chapter Notes

Thanks to ericajen at HPFF for her beta work on this piece.

Dialogue in bold is taken directly from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p491, UK paperback edition.

Arthur Weasley had never felt such conflicting emotions. Joy that Percy had returned to the family and embraced their cause was tempered with the realisation that his wife and all of his children were at Hogwarts and were preparing to fight. Even Ginny, who he and Molly had ordered to stay in the Room of Requirement, would sneak out and join in as soon as she could – he understood his youngest child well enough to know that much.

He found himself in the staff room with Molly, Remus, Bill, Fleur, Kingsley and those teachers who had elected to join in the battle. Horace Slughorn, he noticed, was not present, but Filch was, Peeves cackling in the air above him, and the staff were otherwise represented by the likes of Minerva McGonagall, Pomona Sprout and Filius Flitwick. Even Sybill Trelawney, who he had known Dumbledore thought little of, was apparently eager to join in.

“We’ll have to evacuate the students,” Kingsley was saying. “We don’t want them being collateral if it can be avoided at all.”

Pomona Sprout was nodding. “If we can keep the battle away from the castle at all ...” she began, only to be cut off by a look from McGonagall.

“I really don’t see how that will be possible,” she said curtly. “The best way would be to get the students out of here. And Potter has given me a way to do it.” She began to outline the details of the passage to the Hog’s Head.

Remus nodded. “Yes, that’s how we got in,” he said once she had finished. “It’s a good plan.”

“How long has this tunnel been in use?” Minerva asked, her eyebrows raised.

No one had an answer to that, and after a little while Arthur cleared his throat. “I don’t think we know how long it’s been there, but if it’s available then it should definitely be used. It’s probably the only passage the Death Eaters don’t know about.”

“Yes, well, that is our evacuation plan,” McGonagall said. “All students must be removed from the premises as quickly as possible.”

“Hang on, hang on,” Bill said, the light from the flickering lamps casting odd shadows on his battle-scarred face. “You won’t be able to send them *all* away. The seventh-years are all of age and some of the sixth-years will be too, and if they want to fight I think we should let them.”

“Good point,” said Kingsley. “And I think we will need all the fighters we can get, to be honest. We’re probably fighting a losing battle as it is, but if we can at least hold them off until Potter ...” His voice trailed off and he turned to McGonagall, a question in his eyes. “What is it that Potter needs to do, exactly?”

“He wouldn’t say,” Minerva said. “So we don’t know how to help him. He was saying something about the lost diadem of Ravenclaw but beyond that we have no idea what he’s doing, except that he’s looking for something. How that will help I have no idea, but apparently Dumbledore set him this task and he believes it will help, so ...”

“So we hold up the Death Eaters until Potter’s found whatever he needs to find,” Kingsley said, nodding sagely. “What we need to do now is to form a battle plan.”

Arthur had stood back up to this point, just letting things sort themselves out around him, but he felt he could contribute to this part of the conversation. “We’ll need to secure the perimeter,” he said quickly, before anyone else could say anything. “Keep them out for as long as we can, especially if the evacuation is still happening.”

“Don’t forget the secret passageways into the castle,” Remus added. “We’ll need to put someone at the entrances to all of those in case they try to get in that way.”

Kingsley was nodding. “And if we can get people on the towers to both act as intelligence for an overall picture and cast whatever spells are needed on those below that would be a great help.” He paused. “Have we covered everything? External entrances to the grounds, internal entrances to the castle, fighters on the towers to cast spells on anyone approaching.”

“What about the front door?” Molly asked. “Are we going to defend that?”

“We hope that, for the short term at least, it won’t get to that,” Flitwick said grimly.

“So who’s going to do what?” Sprout asked, her face bleak yet determined.

“I think the teachers should do the internal work,” McGonagall said, “simply because we walk these corridors every day and we know exactly where everything is.”

“Even the secret passageways?” Remus asked, one eyebrow raised.

McGonagall was quiet for a moment. “Maybe not all of those.”

“It’s okay, I can probably remember most of them,” Remus said.

“How about Minerva, Pomona and Filius mount the defence of the towers,” Kingsley suggested. “The rest of us can do the perimeter and the passageways.” He paused, catching Arthur’s eye. “Arthur, a quick word?”

Arthur nodded and, squeezing Molly’s hand gently, went over to see him. “What is it?”

“I’m worried about the forest,” Kingsley admitted. “The other side of it isn’t secured and we can’t be sure that no one will try to come in that way.” He paused. “Only thing is, it’s already after dark and very few of these people will want to monitor it.”

“Hagrid?” Arthur asked immediately. He was, after all, the obvious choice.

Kingsley shook his head. “Good as a support worker but not the main one, I don’t think. He’s too close to it, might not realise when things are going against him.”

“Good point.” Arthur had to admit there was something in that. Much as they loved and appreciated Hagrid, he would be too busy trying to convince rampaging Acromantulas to swap sides to bother with warning those at the castle to prepare themselves. “Well, how about Remus?”

“He’s doing the secret passageways,” Kingsley pointed out.

Arthur shrugged. “I think we can let some of the younger kids do the passageways – they’re probably the safest places out of anywhere to be, if you think about it. If there is to be an attack it’s far more likely to come from outside the grounds or the forest rather than through these tunnels.”

“There’s something in that,” Kingsley said slowly. “But why Remus for the forest?”

Arthur stared at him, not having realised before that the Auror had not made this connection. “Kingsley, where do you think he went during full moons when he was at the school? He probably knows it as well as anyone and better than most.”

Kingsley stood motionless for a moment as he took this new information in, then looked over Arthur’s head towards the door of the staff room. “Remus?”

Turning his head, Arthur saw the younger man pause and turn to face Kingsley. “Yes?”

“Can you keep an eye on the forest?” Kingsley asked. “Arthur and I will do the main gate and the lakefront to make sure no one tries to come in through either of those, but we need someone who knows the forest and isn’t afraid of it to keep an eye on that outlet.”

Remus hesitated, then stood up straighter and squared his shoulders in what was obviously a fit of resolve. “Yes, I’ll do it.”

They all went out to the Great Hall and Arthur and Molly found spaces by their children at the Gryffindor table. Arthur saw tears of joy welling up in his wife’s eyes at the sight of Percy chatting away with his brothers as though he’d never been away at all. It was a

heartening sight and it gave Arthur something extra to fight for – this reunification of his family was something he would protect to the death.

Standing at the staff table, Kingsley got the room's attention with very little effort. He always would, Arthur thought; he had that presence that meant that all he had to do was open his mouth to draw all eyes to him. Much better that Kingsley outlined what was to take place than himself – a shortish, balding, redheaded man with glasses was never the type to convey authority.

“We’ve only got half an hour until midnight,” Kingsley began, **“so we need to act fast! A battle plan has been agreed between the teachers of Hogwarts and the Order of the Phoenix.”** He then quickly outlined what had been decided upon in the staff room, looking to the room for volunteers to take the roles that they did not already have covered.

Arthur smiled when Fred and George volunteered to look after the secret passageways – he had thought that they would rise to that particular challenge.

“All right,” Kingsley was saying in the background, **“leaders up here and we’ll divide up the troops!”**

Arthur looked at his wife, who seemed to have suddenly realised what this all meant. Her face was pale and she kept staring at each of her children in turn, as though this might be the last time she saw them. And it might be, Arthur thought, then hurriedly forced that from his head. All the Weasleys will come out of tonight alive, he thought forcefully. His family would remain intact. It was a sentiment that he had to embrace, no matter what his more rational side was telling him.

There are nine of us, ten if you count Fleur, an annoying voice in his head was saying. *By the law of averages SOMEONE will probably end up the worst for wear.*

Arthur shook his head violently – he would NOT think that. Leaning in to give Molly a quick kiss, he stood up authoritatively and went to join Kingsley, the other Order members and the staff at the head table.

Only a moment later Molly had joined him, Fred and George in her wake as they looked for volunteers to help them guard the passages. Arthur could hear them directing people and sorting out who would go where, and smiled with pride at how well his sons had turned out. You could say what you liked about their pranks, he thought, but their heads were screwed on and their hearts were in the right place. As a father, he couldn't have asked for much more than that.

“Arthur,” he heard Kingsley say, snapping him back to attention, “did you want to take the main gate or the lake?”

“The gate,” Arthur said promptly, wondering why it was so easy for him to make that decision.

“Right, I’ll take the lake,” Kingsley said, nodding, then raised his voice. “Who wants to go with Arthur to the main gate?”

Maybe a dozen people, both adults and students, crowded towards Arthur and he surveyed them critically. Some quite young ones, maybe Ron and Harry's age, some a bit older who must have come back just for the battle, some much older – perhaps teachers he hadn't met yet. Smiling at Molly over the head of a blonde girl with her hair in a ponytail, he addressed his troops.

"We're patrolling the area immediately around the main gates," he told them. "Inside the gates, not outside, just in case of intruders – we want you to stay as safe as possible for as long as possible. There used to be enchantments around this castle until Professor Dumbledore died last year, and Professor McGonagall has done what she can to reinstate them since Professor Snape left a little while ago. However, we don't expect them to be as strong as they once were so we can't be sure that they'll hold for any length of time."

He paused, taking in all their faces, wondering just how many of them would make it through the night. He was responsible for these people now, and he had to make sure that he did what he could to ensure their safety for as long as possible.

"The gates themselves are locked, of course, but again we don't know how long that will last. A few strong curses could well break the enchantment and we'll have to be prepared for that. Now, who among you can cast a Patronus?"

"A corporeal Patronus?" the blonde girl asked.

Arthur nodded. "Can you?"

She shook her head. "Not really. I managed to do some when Harry was teaching us – Harry Potter, that is – but I've not managed one since."

"I can do one," said a young man, maybe twenty years old, stepping forward.

"Can you use it to send messages?" Arthur asked.

The man nodded. "Yes."

"Good," Arthur said, a smile forming across his face. "You can be the lookout. If you see anything, send a Patronus to me and to Professor McGonagall so we can organise the defences." Minerva, he reasoned, would be able to act swiftly from her position in Gryffindor Tower should his own lines be broken. "The rest of you," he went on, "will patrol the gates with me, keeping our eyes and ears open for any sound or any person out of the ordinary. At the first sign of Death Eaters we will notify the other groups and call for backup if necessary." *And if it's available*, that voice inside his head said ominously.

Arthur knew that if they were attacked from more than one place at once – say, the gates and the forest – then there was no way they would be able to stem the flow. The best they could hope for was to delay the inevitable and, if at all possible, survive in the process.

He led his team down the drive to the main gates, the silhouettes of the winged boars visible in the moonlight. He'd barely made it to within a hundred feet of them, though, when a

Patronus arrived. One look at it told Arthur it was from Remus, and when it spoke it confirmed his fears.

“They’re coming in through the forest,” Remus’ hoarse voice told him. “Three, four, maybe five dozen, that I’m able to tell anyway.”

The young man Arthur had set as lookout then got his attention. “They’re on their way,” he said, forgetting that he was to cast a Patronus with that information. “Dozens of them, maybe up to fifty or more.”

Quickly, Arthur sent his own Patronus up to the castle and to Kingsley, advising of the approaching menace. “They’re on their way,” he told his silver weasel. “Forest AND the main gate. We’re outnumbered.”

Very quickly Kingsley’s lynx returned. “Keep them as long as you can,” it advised, “without doing anything stupid.”

Grimly, Arthur fingered his wand. “Did you hear that?” he asked his woefully inadequate band of ten warriors. “We’re to try to hold them off.”

“But how?” asked the blonde girl, worriedly.

Arthur looked at her, the beginning of a smile finding its way to his lips. “Well, for a start, how many of you are any good at Shield Charms? One big one over the gate will halt them for a few seconds at least while we get ourselves into position.”

With that, his soldiers’ faces also set grimly, Arthur stood by the huge gates.

“Okay, troops,” he said. “NOW!”

“*Protego!!*” A dozen or so voices said the word simultaneously, and the gates gave the tiniest shudder and then sat motionless again, protected for the short term.

“What happens now?” someone whispered as they all stared at the crowd moving silently towards them.

“Now,” said Arthur quietly, “we wait.”

Against the wall

Chapter Summary

Fred Weasley

Chapter Notes

Huge thanks to 1917farmgirl for her help with this one-shot.

Text in bold from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, pp491 and 499, UK edition paperback.

The Great Hall was quiet as those present tried to digest what had just happened. Lord Voldemort himself had offered to spare everyone's lives in return for that of Harry Potter, and after a hysterical Slytherin had tried to convince people to turn Harry in – he was, after all, right there in the room with them – those who were prepared to fight had formed a solid wall between her and Harry, and the teachers had started taking the younger students away.

The whole thing was almost surreal until McGonagall had started barking out orders and Kingsley had begun directing the troops.

“Good to see old McGonagall's still the same as ever,” Fred said with a grin, turning to his twin. “And Kingsley. This past year or so hasn't changed them at all, has it?”

“I'd hate to be the one who ends up taking either of them on,” George agreed. “That wouldn't be pretty.” He paused. “Fun to watch ...”

“But not pretty,” Fred finished.

His ears pricked up as he heard Kingsley say someone would have to check the secret passageways into the school to make sure that no Death Eaters got in that way. Well, he thought, no one knows them better than us, do they?

“**Sounds like a job for us!**” he called, indicating himself and George, and he grinned again when Kingsley indicated he approved of that idea.

“Perfect role for us, isn't it?” George said conversationally as they stood up and made their way to a relatively empty part of the Hall so people could join them. “I reckon we've still got

the Marauder's Map memorised, don't you?"

"Pity we gave it to Harry, almost," Fred agreed. "Though I dare say he made good use of it."

"Almost as good as we did," George said. They grinned at each other and surveyed the group standing in front of them – those who had volunteered to help defend the passageways.

"Right," Fred said authoritatively, "there are seven secret passages leading out of Hogwarts."

George picked up for him. "One has caved in so we don't need to worry about that one, one comes out underneath the Whomping Willow so we don't reckon anyone's ever used it, but there are still five that could be used by the Death Eaters so we'll need to cover those. You all prepared to help out?"

A dozen heads nodded, and Fred felt satisfied that this, at least, they could manage without too much difficulty and without anyone getting hurt. He had no qualms about himself or George – they could look after themselves, they'd proven that already – but these teenagers in front of him looked young, naive and terrified. Fortunately Lee had joined them too and would be able to become a third figurehead.

"Now, the passages are all over the school," he said, again authoritatively. He enjoyed the sense of power being in control of things gave him, it was one of the nicer parts of running the joke shop.

"There's one on the third floor behind that statue of the humpbacked witch," George continued. "You open it by saying *Dissendium*. Some of us will have to go there."

"Another one comes out on the second floor just near the old entrance to the Headmaster's office," Fred went on. "We never used that one because Filch knew about it," – he grinned at George and Lee – "but as far as we know it's still useable so we'd better check it out."

"There's another one on this floor – the ground floor," George added. "Down that corridor past classroom eleven and stop at the bust of Pierre Bonaccord, it's right behind him."

Fred was counting on his fingers. "Third floor witch, second floor Headmasters office, ground floor bust of Pierre Bonaccord. Don't worry about the Whomping Willow or the fourth floor mirror ... that's five. What else is there?"

"Don't forget the fifth floor just behind Gregory the Smarmy," Lee said. Fred chuckled to himself – he and George had chosen to put their temporary swamp there for a reason, having used the passage to hide in when Mrs Norris had come by just before they set it up.

"Yeah, that's six," George said. "Oh, of course, the staff room. There's one that leads right into the staff room, there's a false back in the wardrobe they keep their cloaks in and that one goes to ... well, we actually don't know where it goes, it's the only one we never got to try. Somewhere in Hogsmeade, anyway, we think."

"Right," Fred said again. "So we need two groups on the ground floor, one on the second, one on the third and one on the fifth. Who wants to go where?"

The group was soon sorted into fifts, with Ernie Macmillan leading a group to the fifth floor, George taking on the humpbacked witch on the third, Cho Chang heading for the second floor, Lee going to the staff room and Fred going to the bust of Pierre Bonaccord on the ground floor.

“What do we do when we get there?” a girl with blonde hair asked as she followed him.

He shrugged. “Listen for any activity in the passage, and if we hear anything, open up and attack. We’ll have the benefit of surprise. That okay with you, er ...” He trailed off, realising he didn’t know her name.

“Hannah,” she said, not batting an eyelid at the thought of fighting. “Hannah Abbott. And yes, of course that’s fine. Death Eaters killed my mother; I want to fight.”

Fred noticed her swallow as she said the words, but her face set grimly and he understood – the desire for revenge could, he’d heard, be overwhelming. “Well, you’ve come to the right place,” he said.

The group stopped when they reached the plinth holding Bonaccord’s bust. “What now?” asked a boy who didn’t look much older than fifth year, though he had to be of age if McGonagall had let him stay.

“We wait,” Fred said, pulling his wand out. “And we listen. If ANYONE comes through this passageway, we’ll know about it, and we’ll be the last thing that Death Eater ever sees.”

The blonde girl looked pale but determined. “So we’re to kill them.”

“If necessary,” Fred said, a little disquieted by her grim resolve.

Just then they heard a loud bang and a crash, and it felt like the castle itself shook. Turning around to look for a window, Fred saw that the giants had joined the fight, and from the look of things on the other side. The thought didn’t fill him with confidence.

“How,” said a familiar voice, “are we ever going to hear anything over this racket?” Fred turned around to see Lee Jordan grinning at him. “Bit loud for the stealthy approach, don’t you think?”

There was another crash, the walls shook and the bust of Pierre Bonaccord fell off its plinth and shattered on the stone floor, narrowly missing Lee’s foot.

Fred laughed. “Maybe just a bit. Thought you were in the staff room?”

“That one’s covered,” Lee said. “You know, with the staff going in and out all the time? I don’t think ANY Death Eater would make it out of there without getting caught.”

“So where are your troops?” Fred asked, trying to keep an ear on the tunnel just in case.

Lee shrugged. “Out there somewhere,” he said dismissively, indicating the rest of the castle with a wave of his arm.

“Hey, did I hear something then?” Hannah Abbott asked suddenly, and Fred immediately leaned in towards the tunnel again, wand at the ready, trying in vain to hear any miniscule sounds over the roar of the battle around them.

On the wall behind them Sir Cadogan was racing through the portraits, shouting as he went, and in the din and confusion Fred almost missed the fast-moving shape of Harry Potter as it sprinted past them in search of something or other.

“**Nice night for it!**” Fred shouted at Harry’s departing form, not able to resist saying something to the boy expected to be the hero of the day. The castle quaked yet again as the giants outside threw everything they had at it, and he found himself grinning, revelling in the adrenaline. “How do you reckon George is going?” he went on, turning around to find Lee.

“Where is he?” Lee asked, his wand still on the spot the tunnel came out.

“Third floor,” Fred said. “Though he’s got the Honeydukes tunnel, so probably if anyone comes through that they’ll be so full they won’t be able to fight anyway. And if they’ve got their pockets full, George’ll make the most of that too.” Smiling at this thought, he turned back to the empty plinth.

“How long will we be doing this?” Hannah Abbott asked suddenly, though she didn’t move her wand. The castle shook yet again and she glanced towards the ceiling nervously. “Do we really think that anyone’s going to try to come in this way?”

Fred shrugged. “Thing is, we can’t rule it out. If you want to go off and fight somewhere else, go for it. I’ll stay here. After all,” he said, still grinning and still high on adrenaline, “we’ve got a castle to defend.”

Retribution

Chapter Summary

Bill Weasley

Bill Weasley stopped and wiped his brow. An anonymous Death Eater lay at his feet, Stunned and then paralysed by a full body bind, and Bill breathed out deeply as he kicked the prone figure towards the wall. Someone else could deal with that later, he thought. He had more fighting to do.

Of course, it wasn't like he hadn't done his share of fighting already. He had arrived at the castle early, almost as soon as word had gone out that Harry had arrived and would lead the charge, and he had been on the front line when the first wave of Death Eaters had arrived at the castle. He had killed few but Stunned many, and while he liked the idea of keeping a tally of his conquests the battle was just going too fast to stop and take stock. At least ten, he thought with some satisfaction, sticking his wand behind his ear as he pushed past another duelling pair.

Not far away he spied his wife, duelling as well, her wand moving thick and fast in battle with yet another black-clad anonymous figure. Bill would have been happier if their adversaries had taken their masks off, as he preferred knowing who he was up against. However, he realised, a Death Eater is a Death Eater and they had all been trained to kill. From that perspective, it didn't matter who they were, just what – and who – they represented.

It was true, he realised, that for every Death Eater who went down, it felt like a small victory over Voldemort himself. How much that mattered in the long run, though, remained to be seen.

On his left he saw Fleur dispatch her opponent with skill and breathed out again. He hadn't realised he was holding his breath as she fought but he was happy to admit his relief that she had survived that particular encounter. Pushing his way through the chaos, he wrapped his arms around her.

"How many now?" he asked.

"Five," she said, a broad smile across her face as she revelled in the adrenaline the battle was providing. "And eet ees so tiring!!" She pulled a hand back and wiped her own brow, pushing a strand of hair behind her ear as she did so. "Zere ees still work to do, though, Bill. Zere are more of zem coming."

Turning to look where she was pointing, Bill felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand on edge. Right in the middle of the oncoming group of Death Eaters, his mask already off his face, was Fenrir Greyback. He was licking his lips as he surveyed the crowd, no doubt anticipating the feast that potentially awaited him.

"Over my dead body is that thing coming in here," Bill said viciously, his hand unconsciously going to his own face where the scars from his battle with Greyback a year before could still be seen. "Not with all those kids around."

"Bill! Be careful!" he heard Fleur say desperately, but he ignored her. She was smart and brave and would be able to look after herself, he thought, and likewise he could fight his own battles. This was one of them; this was something that he needed to do.

"Greyback," he hissed as soon as he got close enough to the foul creature. "Get the hell out of here. You're not wanted."

"Oh, I think I'm wanted," the werewolf said, his voice slimy and repulsive. "All this fresh meat? You couldn't keep me away."

Fury engulfing him, Bill hurled a Blasting Curse at Greyback, only to have it miss and blow up a statue by the main doors.

The werewolf laughed. "Is that the best you can do? Then again, by the look of you, you've come off second best to me before ..."

The thing didn't even remember him. Bill's rage grew in intensity and for the first time in his life he considered the use of an Unforgiveable. Against Greyback, he thought, it would be acceptable.

"*Crucio!*" he cried, aiming at the fast-moving werewolf, but again he missed and the spell hit the floor behind him. Frustrated, he tried again. "*Incendio!*"

This time the charm hit its target and Greyback's robes caught on fire. The creature doused them quickly and extinguished them, but in doing so lost valuable seconds in which Bill could attack again. "*Stupefy!*" He wanted to use something harsher but the area around them was so chaotic, with so many different things happening at once, that he didn't want to risk missing Greyback and hitting one of the students instead.

The Stunning spell worked, and the werewolf fell backwards onto the stone floor. Satisfied, Bill kicked him a few times and tried to push the body out of the way so that those still fighting had some more room. Unfortunately, though, he hadn't taken into account the fact that Stunners didn't work so well on part-humans, and the werewolf part of his victim, which had been allowed to engulf and consume the human side, was far more resilient than most people were. On being kicked, he woke up.

Bill wasn't expecting to be grabbed around the calf and the attack, when it came, took him completely off guard. Falling heavily to the ground, he lost hold of his wand and could do nothing but try to defend himself physically as the werewolf first stood up, then kicked him

mercilessly.

"Best you could do, was it?" he snarled, pointedly having his foot make contact with Bill's year-old scars from the last time they'd fought. "Guess you'll think twice before taking me on again. But I'm hungry now, and you don't look too tender."

Reaching around for his wand, Bill could only watch as Greyback laughed and re-joined the battle, making a beeline for a vulnerable-looking girl who looked about Ron's age. It was nowhere near a full moon but he was clearly planning to maul her, and Bill was left ruing his crucial loss of concentration. Picking himself (and his wand) up, he started to push through the crowds to the girl, who was very obviously out of her depth in this particular battle and would very likely be killed at any moment.

Before he could get near enough to help out, though, Greyback was suddenly thrown off his feet and hurled to the wall behind, and Bill looked around to see Hermione Granger glaring at the werewolf, her wand outstretched and raw fury on her face. Clearly she had blasted him off this unknown girl, who was now sitting up, looking pale and confused. Satisfied that she was safe, Bill started to head towards the werewolf again, intent on ending this destruction for good.

Again, though, he was thwarted, unable to finish the job due to someone else getting in first. This time it was Professor Trelawney, of all people, who was leaning over the balustrade above and dropping crystal balls on those Death Eaters in range. Greyback, already barely conscious from being slammed into the stone wall like that, was one of the first beneficiaries of this action and, after one landed neatly on his head, he dropped further down the wall and moved no more.

Bill swore loudly, though it was unlikely that anyone would have heard him over the din. While he was happy that Greyback had been stopped, and stopped permanently, part of him was disappointed that he hadn't been the one to do it.

"Never mind, Bill," came a throaty voice at his ear, and he turned gratefully to see his wife standing next to him. "What eez more eemportant, you being ze one to defeat 'im or 'im being defeated at all?"

"Him being defeated," Bill admitted, allowing himself to calm down at her words. He turned to her. "But how have you been? Are you okay?"

He had to admit, she had looked better, but she flashed him a brilliant smile and nodded. "Some cuts and bruises, *oui*, but nothing zat cannot be fixed," she said. "And I 'ave fought well. My father would be proud."

"I'm proud," he told her, thankful that she at least was still all right. "Though there's work to be done yet. Can you manage?"

She nodded, turning them both around so their backs were to the motionless form of Greyback against the wall. That was behind them now, and they had new challenges to face

in this battle. "I can manage," she reassured him, her wand out at the ready. "After all, zeroes still a war to win."

The lie

Chapter Summary

Ginny Weasley

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ginny felt like she might collapse under the strain of it all. She'd been through an emotional rollercoaster tonight, first with the return of Percy, then the loss of Fred, then the voice of Voldemort, demanding the boy she loved to turn himself in, its very tone sending shivers down her spine. She hadn't realised how high and cold that voice was, having never heard it before, but she knew that she didn't want to hear it again.

I could never be a Death Eater, she thought grimly. I couldn't take orders from that voice. I'd rather die than hear that over and over again.

She hadn't been able to help herself – as soon as the time neared she headed for the forest, needing to know if Harry would do the noble thing and sacrifice himself. Voldemort had said that if he did, then everyone in the school would be able to leave unharmed, and that was the sort of thing that would appeal to his sense of heroism. No, heroism was the wrong word, but she knew what he meant. Hermione had said it once, that he had a thing for saving people, and while she refused to criticise Harry she had to admit there was something in that.

Therefore, she hovered between the school and the forest, anxious and worried. She knew that if Harry went into that forest, to Voldemort, he would be killed, and she couldn't cope with that. She couldn't lose Harry, could she? She, her whole family, had already lost Fred tonight, and the thought of Harry going too ... that was too much to bear. She didn't know what she would say to him if she saw him, but she had to say something, had to make sure he understood that self-sacrifice like that was not an acceptable outcome. She wouldn't let him just walk into that forest; she would go with him, against his wishes if need be, and do whatever needed to be done to save him. Her chin set obstinately – she wouldn't take no for an answer. She had to do it.

Not knowing what to do while she waited, she paced impatiently back and forth. Maybe her wait would be in vain and he would never come, she thought hopefully. But no – she didn't believe that, no matter how much she wanted to. She knew that Harry would come, and come before midnight. The only question was when.

Her attention was distracted by some movement to her left and she turned instinctively, looking for the dark hair and glasses, the familiar gait. Her heart sank when she realised that the intruder was not in fact Harry, but Neville and Oliver Wood, who were carrying ... Oh,

that was horrible. They were carrying Colin Creevey, who was in her class ... who *had been* in her class. Colin wasn't even of age but he'd still been killed as part of the battle here tonight.

Yet another innocent victim.

Ginny wondered how many more there would be before this night, this battle, this war ended. She wasn't sure how many more she could take, especially if more of her family or Harry were part of the body count. Swallowing hard, she reminded herself to be strong. She couldn't fall apart, not now. There was still so much to do.

She heard something else and swung around, looking for Harry once more. Once more, though, it wasn't him. This time the culprit was a young girl, maybe her own age and maybe even younger, clutching at an injury, and she couldn't help but offer some assistance.

"What's wrong?" she asked, catching the girl as she lost her footing and fell. "Where does it hurt?"

"Everywhere," the girl said, her voice rasping with obvious pain. "I hate this war. I don't want to be part of it anymore."

"None of us do," Ginny said, surprising herself when she realised it was true, on her own part at least.

"I want my mum," the girl whispered. "I want my mum."

And I want mine ...

Ginny felt a tear form in her eye. This girl, so young and innocent, had thought that fighting in this battle was the right thing to do. The same thing that Ginny herself had thought, before she saw the bodies starting to pile up. First Fred, then Lupin, then Tonks, now Colin ... it was like a nightmare happening again and again. And now she found herself trying to comfort someone she didn't know, trying to convince them that everything was going to be all right, when in her heart she was sure that it would never be all right again. Not without Fred, not without Harry.

She made herself lie to the girl, trying to console her, to convince her that they would be able to get her into the castle and that everything would work out for the best. The look in the girl's eyes said that she wanted to believe her, that she wanted desperately for it to be true, so she said it, hating herself for having to let someone down, even someone she'd never met and for whom all hope seemed gone. Even consoling and comforting that stranger was important enough to mangle the truth so horribly and say the words she just couldn't believe.

"It's going to be all right."

Disclaimer: Text in bold is dialogue taken directly from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, page 558, UK edition paperback.

The longest walk

Chapter Summary

Rubeus Hagrid

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Rubeus Hagrid had more energy than he knew what to do with. Not content with rushing around the castle, Fang following closely behind, roaring encouragement at everyone he saw battling against the Death Eaters, he now felt the need to hurry outside and try to convince the Acromantulas to switch sides. Obviously they were mistaken, he thought, because Aragog would never have gone against Hagrid like that and fought for the other side. If he could find their leader, he thought, he'd be able to persuade them to fight for good over evil.

"Hi, Grawpy!" he yelled, waving at his half-brother over the chaos. Grawp turned around and they caught each other's eyes for just a moment before Hagrid turned away and headed back towards the forest, searching the swarming giant spiders for a face he recognised.

There he is, Hagrid thought, finally spotting a familiar face in the darkness. Aragog's eldest son was sure to listen to reason. Fighting his way through the herd, he tried to corner the giant beast.

"What're ye doing?" he asked. "Fightin' with the Death Eaters? Yer dad would never have agreed to that!"

"Our father is dead and his wishes no longer apply," the Acromantula said coldly. "We have been promised freedom and fresh meat. You cannot provide the same incentives."

"Ye're mad," Hagrid protested, aghast.

"We need to eat," the spider went on as though Hagrid hadn't spoken. "And the castle is full of fresh, warm meat. If you will not support us, I will have to make you the first course." His eight beady eyes stared Hagrid down and his pincers clicked together threateningly. Taking the hint, Hagrid backed away slowly, not wanting to antagonise this magnificent creature any longer.

Unfortunately, on his retreat, he backed into one of Aragog's other children, and one not so accepting of him. Turning just in time to see the beast's glee as he felt enormous pincers clamping around his leg, Hagrid collapsed and fell to the ground, unconscious.

When he awoke, he found himself not only upright (though his leg was numb), but tied to a

tree in a clearing in the forest. Squinting a little until his eyes began to focus again, he soon realised he was a prisoner of the Death Eaters, and when he heard the voice of Lord Voldemort himself his heart sank. No matter what else happened tonight, he thought, there was no way he would get out of it alive.

The feeling was starting to come back to his leg and he wondered how long he had been tied there, and how he had managed to get to the clearing at all. Probably he had been levitated and pushed, he thought, noticing there seemed to be some scratches and gashes on the exposed skin of his hands and arms, and even though his vision was returning he was still having trouble seeing out of his left eye. Whoever had got him here hadn't been worried about injuring him on the way, he thought ruefully, and could quite possibly have used his unconscious form as practice for some curses and hexes. The thought did not fill him with confidence.

He-who-must-not-be-named was standing by the fire in the middle of the clearing, wondering where Harry was. From his position in the darkness, Hagrid allowed himself to smile. Harry would never give himself up, he thought proudly. Harry would lead the fight and somehow he would manage to win it. Harry would always come up trumps.

He was still feeling smug in this knowledge when Harry himself appeared in the clearing, pulling his Invisibility Cloak off and facing his adversary. He was clearly nervous, almost frightened, but he was there, and when he spoke he offered his own life in return for the lives of those in the castle. For the second time in a few minutes, Hagrid's heart sank yet again. He yelled to Harry not to do it, not to sacrifice himself, that there had to be another way, but he was silenced almost immediately by one of the Death Eaters' wands. There was absolutely nothing he could do to help Harry, to save him, to prevent what now seemed inevitable.

Hagrid couldn't watch as Harry stood to face Voldemort, and as he heard that cold high voice start speaking the curse he closed his eyes so he wouldn't see the event itself. The sound of a body crumpling to the forest floor was enough to prove the Dark Lord had been successful, that he had finally managed to overcome the face of the fight against him. Harry, Hagrid knew, was gone.

"You," he heard Voldemort say. **"Examine him. Tell me whether he is dead."**

Opening his eyes just a crack, he saw Lucius Malfoy's wife leaning over Harry's body, her hand beneath the clothing on his chest. She leaned in very close to him as she checked all vital signs, then finally she raised her head and looked at her master, confirming the horrible truth, that Harry's life had indeed ended.

Hagrid couldn't stop the tears falling down his cheeks. It seemed nothing could be worse than this – as long as Harry had lived, there had been hope. Now he would be mourning not only his friend but the future of the wizarding world. There was no way the Order could win now, he thought. With Harry gone, the heart of the Order was defeated, and he was sure they would give up the fight. Voldemort had won, and he had witnessed the moment of victory.

He-who-must-not-be-named, however, hadn't finished. Not content with merely murdering his adversary, he now saw fit to torture the body. Hagrid heard the Unforgivable Curses being

cast but again he couldn't bring himself to watch – the spectacle of what was left of Harry being flung around and tortured like he was a piece of meat was too much. Again and again Hagrid heard the thud of Harry's body landing on the soft earth, and once he heard the shatter of glass as his spectacles were destroyed. It was not enough to defeat Harry, he now saw; the victory had to be complete and unequivocal.

Finally, the torture – both of Harry's body and of Hagrid's soul – ended, and Harry was allowed to rest on the ground, his body a jumble of limbs jutting out at all sorts of angles. The sight set Hagrid's tears off yet again ... at the very least, couldn't Harry have just a little dignity? Of course not, he realised belatedly. This was Voldemort, after all. Mercy was not even in his vocabulary.

Hagrid was vaguely aware of orders being barked out about dragging Harry's battered body back to the castle, so those defending it could see proof of his demise, and was startled into paying more attention when he realised that Voldemort was pointing right at him.

"You carry him," the high cold voice said nastily. **"He will be nice and visible in your arms, will he not?"** Someone freed him from his binds and he was led forward, still sobbing at the sight of Harry, lying motionless on the ground.

Harry was picked up clumsily and dumped into Hagrid's waiting arms, the broken glasses forced violently onto his face. He was still warm, Hagrid realised, and so light! Fang could well weigh more. But he wasn't moving, wasn't breathing, and would never do so again. The war was over, Hagrid thought bitterly, struggling to see through his tears, and he was carrying the proof.

Even though they weren't particularly far into the forest, especially by Hagrid's standards, the walk back to the castle was the longest he had ever taken. Just putting one foot in front of the other was a feat of endurance, of mind over matter, as he forced himself to go on, to show those at Hogwarts that all hope was indeed lost, though he had to admit the wand in his back, whoever it belonged to, was also a motivating factor.

Halfway back they encountered the centaurs. Hagrid glared at them, resenting their decision not to join in the fight, and he couldn't resist confronting them with Harry's body. Who knows, he reasoned, if they had chosen to join in then maybe this wouldn't have happened. Maybe there would still be hope. Maybe, just maybe, the world wouldn't end tonight.

Finally, after what felt like forever, they reached the edge of the forest and found themselves on the lawn in front of the castle. Voldemort spoke and again, his voice echoed all around like it was inside their heads, as he addressed the gathered throng.

"Harry Potter is dead," he said, gesturing towards Hagrid as proof of his statement. **"He was killed as he ran away, trying to save himself while you lay down your lives for him."**

Hagrid, even through his tears, bristled at the lie. How dare Voldemort defame Harry like that? Everyone who knew him KNEW he would never try to save himself over everyone else, but scandalous tales like this were fodder for gullible ears. He shuddered at the thought of Rita Skeeter getting wind of it.

The reaction of the crowd to the news of Harry's demise was both predictable and heart-wrenching. Still crying himself, Hagrid registered the cries of "No" and the general air of disbelief that accompanied it. However, he was heartened by the reaction of none other than Neville Longbottom, who stood forward to raise the standard for those in his wake. Neville would not accept defeat, even with the death of Harry Potter, Hagrid suddenly realised. Neville, like his parents, believed the best way to go was to go fighting.

Neville Longbottom had hope. And, just briefly, as his tears started miraculously to dry up, Hagrid put Harry down gently on the ground near his feet and clenched his own fists.

Maybe, he thought, I can find hope too.

Chapter End Notes

Text in bold is from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, pp 581-3, UK paperback edition

Thanks to Jasmine (blueirony) for her beta work on this one-shot

Eyes of rubies

Chapter Summary

The Sword of Gryffindor

I bide my time, appearing only when called upon for aid. I lie dormant for decades, even centuries, before showing myself when most needed, and in the past decade I have seen more action than I did in the century prior. I recognise the grip of one young wizard who has wielded me more than once, but in reality I appear to any I deem worthy, who are in need of my help.

I have slain fabulous beasts, been used as a warning and spent years on display. I have been stolen and re-claimed and hidden away. Always, though, I find my true calling. Always I come to those who are worthy. Always I answer the call of need.

I was secreted by goblins after my last escapade, but it is a matter of only hours later that I find myself summoned once again, this time by a boy whose face and grip are not familiar. It is through the Hat of my owner that I arrive, flames warming my cold exterior as my host begins its disintegration. It saddens but does not surprise me ... as old as I am, the Hat does not have the benefit of being made of silver and other metals and would always fracture first.

Firm, warm hands grip me confidently and I feel myself being sliced through the air. This new possessor is determined, I can see, with passion in his eyes and a fire in his belly. Fitting, then, that he was wearing the Hat when it met its match, because the fire of the Hat has found its way into this young man's resolve. With me in his hand, nothing can defeat him.

Soon enough I feel the familiar texture of flesh and blood, and realise I have been used in the slaughter of a snake. This is not unheard of – I was used to slay a Basilisk only a matter of years ago, and the venom of that beast is still present on my blade. I sense that this venom was instrumental in the death of this latest snake: whether it really did play a role I cannot say, but there is something in me that says that it did.

The boy who wields me – for he is a boy, no matter how determined his swordplay – looks satisfied at the carnage he has caused, and I remind myself that this boy must indeed be a true Gryffindor if he was able to summon me so successfully. Therefore, this snake must have threatened the values my owner held in some way, as for no other cause can I be so beckoned. All I hope now is that this boy thinks to clean me off before using me again. The blood of this snake is evil, and I do not wish to have evil – though it may also be strength – penetrating my blade.

I hear the sound of cheering and my possessor stops for a moment to take in what he has achieved. Clearly this is some hurdle which has now been overcome, and he is satisfied with

his work. He takes a corner of his robes and wipes me down, and I too am satisfied. Evil has been averted.

My work is done.

Hope

Chapter Summary

Charlie Weasley

Even living in Romania with his dragons, Charlie had known what was happening with the Ministry back in England. Heck, he'd been at Bill's wedding when they'd found out that Scrimgeour had been killed and the Death Eaters had taken over. Through letters from his parents, too, he'd known what was happening at Hogwarts and what his baby sister was being subjected to. Therefore, when the call to arms had come, he'd been one of the first to raise his hand to volunteer.

It wasn't just his own brawn and wand skills that he could contribute, though. Charlie boasted one of the best affinities with magical beasts of any wizard alive, and he had high hopes of galvanising some of the inhabitants of the Forbidden Forest to join in the fight against Voldemort.

And so, one night in early May, Charlie found himself marching up to the castle from the main gates. After checking in with his father and Bill, who were easily found in the vicinity of the Great Hall, Charlie grabbed a few likely souls and headed on down to the forest. He would have liked to have engaged Hagrid in this activity but apparently the big man was somewhere upstairs defending the castle, so Charlie would have to do this without him. Not to worry, he thought. He could do this alone, with his hands tied behind his back, if he needed to; the others were there to help control the beasts, if that became necessary.

The centaurs were the first intelligent creatures he found, and they were unsurprisingly hesitant to take part in a wizard's battle.

"It is not for us to decide," Bane said coldly.

"Indeed not," Magorian agreed. "This night has been foreseen for many years, and nowhere was it said that the centaurs chose a side and joined in the battle."

Charlie just shrugged, knowing enough to not bother trying to convince them. If they wanted to join in, they would do it of their own accord. "Have it your way," he said. "But be aware that there could be a number of creatures willing to fight who could be coming this way shortly. You might want to stand aside for a bit." He paused. "And, of course, you might find the Death Eaters storming through here themselves soon enough, and they won't be nearly as polite as we are."

"You call this polite?" Magorian asked incredulously. "Invading our forest and asking us to

offer our lives in a cause that is not our own?"

"I ask nothing," Charlie said. "I'm just telling it like it is. You can take it however you like." And, leaving them behind, he strode off deeper into the forest, his helpers following behind him.

Further in he had more luck with the hippogriffs, which consented to be led back to the castle by one of his helpers, though the Acromantulas were clearly itching to join the fight alongside the Death Eaters rather than the Order. Charlie could do nothing – he couldn't offer them human flesh to eat, like Voldemort would – and simply reminded himself to steer clear of that area. Finally, he found what he was looking for: Thestrals.

Charlie could see them, thanks to a horrific experience where he had witnessed the death of a colleague at the claws of a Swedish Short-Snout dragon, but he was aware that at least one of the people he had brought with him could not. "It's okay," he said reassuringly. "They're harmless if you know how to deal with them."

"And how do you deal with them?" the boy asked, his voice wavering.

"With respect, like you would any other creature in this forest," Charlie explained. "These ones are pretty tame – Hagrid keeps them well trained in case they're needed as a means of transport. Here, touch it." He grabbed the boy's arm and directed his hand towards the nearest beast's flank, letting him feel its skin.

"And what do we do now we've found them?" the boy asked.

Charlie grinned. "We join in the battle. On their backs." And he helped the younger wizards and witches onto the backs of the Thestrals, then clambered aboard one himself.

Before long they were soaring above the forest, moving swiftly in the direction of the castle. Below him, Charlie could see Death Eaters tracing his own footsteps, hurtling through the undergrowth, and was pleased that he had managed to get his group out in time. He didn't fancy a wand battle in the middle of the forest.

Sure enough, the Acromantulas were moving up the lawns to attack, and Charlie sent down a few hexes in an attempt to pause them, knowing as he did that a single curse wasn't powerful enough to actually make them stop. The Death Eaters, he saw now, had also recruited some giants, so it was up to him and his crew to try to confuse them enough to get them away from the castle.

Ducking and weaving, shooting curses and hexes at anything that looked like it was on the wrong side, Charlie managed to distract three or four of the giants and lure them away from the stone walls. Having successfully managed that, he flew low and managed to hit a couple with body-bind curses ... not strong enough to hold them indefinitely, he knew, but strong enough to put them out of action for a little while at least. Following his lead, his protégés did likewise, trying to cause enough havoc to keep as many Acromantulas and giants at bay as possible.

Out of the corner of his eye Charlie saw another group move out of the forest, perhaps in protest against the number of Death Eaters now beneath its boughs: the centaurs had finally decided to join in the battle. He went down to greet them.

"Changed your mind, eh, Magorian?" he asked cheerfully, still astride his Thestral. They were still some way from the castle and while Charlie could see its towers and the flashes of light therein, the main doors were obscured from view.

"The forest is full of Dementors," Magorian said solemnly. "We have been driven out. We do not wish for our forest to become home to such creatures."

"Good for you," Charlie said with a grin.

"It is almost over, though," said Bane. "Hagrid just passed us, carrying the body of Harry Potter ..."

Charlie's heart sank. Harry was dead? But he'd been the figurehead, the person around whom the Order had focused their efforts. If he was dead, then a lot of people would lose hope. Anyone could see that.

"We have to do what we can," he said bracingly. "It's not over yet. While we still live, there's still hope."

"We will try," said Magorian, his voice grave, and Charlie knew that the centaurs would do everything in their power.

"What's happening?" asked one of the young wizards, who had landed nearby. "What's going on?"

"Harry Potter is dead," Charlie said, struggling to say the words. "But there is still hope." As he said the words, he realised their truth. Even if Harry WAS gone, it didn't mean that the rest of them couldn't still try their hardest to achieve victory. "The centaurs have joined in the battle. Come on, let's go to the castle." And, dismounting, he lit his wand and scrambled back to the main building, hurrying past a portly-looking wizard in emerald-green pyjamas and a number of grim-looking teenagers as he went.

He only just beat the centaurs into the Great Hall, almost deafened by the additional noise the clattering of their hooves on the stone floor made against the sounds of the battle. Wand flashing, he joined in, finding his father and duelling his way towards him, leaving a pile of defeated Death Eaters in his wake.

"Been a rough day," Arthur said as soon as they were close enough to talk.

Charlie nodded. His father looked old and weary, though grimly determined. "Harry?"

Arthur nodded. "Seems so," he said, his voice constricted. "But don't give up just yet," he went on, seemingly finding what was probably his ninth wind as he started to battle yet another opponent. Charlie joined in, and the hooded and masked figure was quickly

dispatched. "There are more of us than there are of them."

Charlie turned his head and looked around the Great Hall. His father was right – if attrition would win the day, then the Death Eaters were fighting a losing battle. His heart leapt, just a little.

"So ... you think there really is hope?"

Arthur nodded, his gaze fixed on the living, breathing figure of Harry Potter that had suddenly, miraculously, appeared in the middle of the room, his wand trained on Voldemort himself. "I think so, Charlie. I think so."

What is most important

Chapter Summary

Lucius Malfoy

They were on their way back to the castle. The oaf Hagrid was carrying the body of Harry Potter, making a spectacle of himself with those noisy tears, and the rest of the party were silently following their leader, wondering how quickly those defying them would capitulate upon the sight of their fallen hero.

Lucius felt strangely serene. By now used to not carrying a wand, he sidled up to his wife and reached for her hand. "We will find him soon," he whispered as quietly as he could, hoping she could hear him. "We will find Draco."

"He's alive," she replied, her voice so soft it was almost swept away by the wind. "He's alive."

He squeezed her hand again, admiring her optimism but unable to share it. He did not see how Draco could have survived his latest assignment – to guard a tapestry in the castle in case the Potter boy went looking for it. While he didn't believe that Potter would have killed his son, he was not so sure about others who were fighting against the Dark Lord. To some people, any Malfoy was fair game.

Narcissa gripped his hand fiercely as they followed the dark shape of Lord Voldemort. She too was wandless, having given hers to Draco so that he would at least be armed on his foray into the battle zone. They, it was hoped, would not be disadvantaged by not having their wands. They would not be fighting.

However, things started going wrong almost as soon as they reached the castle proper. The Dark Lord's spells were not holding for some reason, and the Longbottom boy pulled an ancient sword from the Sorting Hat somehow and used it to slice off the head of Nagini. Worse still, Potter's body went missing.

"What happened to Potter?" he asked his wife, hoping the body hadn't been carried away by their opposition. Even in death, Potter still had some leverage.

"He's not dead," she muttered.

He stared at her. "WHAT?"

"Not dead," she repeated. Fortunately their conversation was muffled by the sound of the resistance and they were unlikely to be overheard. "He was breathing. And I asked him if Draco was still alive and he said that he was."

He kept staring. “You – LIED – to the Dark Lord?” He wasn’t sure if he was more impressed with her nerve for trying it in the first place, or the fact that she had succeeded.

She nodded resolutely. “Yes. If it would enable me to come here and search for my son, I would do anything.”

It was a sentiment he couldn’t argue with, and for the first time since they had bade Draco farewell a few hours earlier, he allowed himself to hope that his family could be reunited. At that moment he felt he truly understood his wife – she felt that victory in the battle, in the war, was less important than having the three of them together again, safe and unharmed.

As they neared the castle, he was highly conscious that their lack of wands or weapons of any sort was a major hindrance. Not even the most naive combatant would believe that they would be able to just walk into the castle unassailed, not when they were well known to be in Voldemort’s inner circle.

“How will we get in?” he asked.

She didn’t need to confirm what he meant – they were both thinking the same thing. “Wait till my sister is distracted,” she said. He shuddered a little: Bellatrix, a formidable witch with loyalty ONLY to the Dark Lord, would certainly ask questions about their intentions if she saw them skulking off. “If she and the Dark Lord are both occupied with other things, we might have an opportunity.”

“But we can’t just walk in the front door,” he pointed out, stating the obvious while thinking furiously. “Following on the back of a victorious party, perhaps, but not if they are still fighting.” He paused. “We will remove our masks and cloaks,” he said eventually. “While we might be recognised for ourselves we won’t be seen as Death Eaters. Some people may even think we’re on their side.” Another pause as he considered his position, including what would happen to him and Narcissa if Voldemort realised what they were doing. “Though they might not be as wrong as they think,” he went on.

Narcissa nodded again. “If we stay close to the walls we might be able to move around to find him,” she added. “Here –” and she tied a dark scarf around her brilliant blonde hair – “this might fool them for a moment.”

“The resistance, or Bella?” he asked quietly.

“All of them,” she responded.

There was enough confusion around them for them to be able to slip away unseen and head for the oak doors of the castle. Lucius kept his cloak and hood on until they reached the front steps, because his fair hair would have shone out like a beacon, but once under the shadow of the buttresses he discarded the garment entirely. As he had pointed out to Narcissa a minute ago, it marked him too readily as a Death Eater.

It was chaos inside and they spent a lot of time trying to dodge wayward spells, fighting tables and falling debris, all the while searching for the pale blond hair and pointed face of their son. Up stairs and along corridors, through tunnels and behind tapestries, they searched

everywhere they thought Draco might be. They even looked in the Slytherin common room, on the theory that he might have sought shelter there from the tumult above.

Finally, after almost giving up, they spotted him. Just outside the Great Hall, staring transfixed at what was happening in that room, their son was partially hidden by a fallen statue. Narcissa ran to him.

“Draco!” she cried breathlessly. “You’re all right!”

“Sshhh,” Draco admonished, putting a finger to his lips. “Watch.”

They turned and stared at the spectacle inside the Hall. Harry Potter, indeed alive as Narcissa had indicated, was staring down the Dark Lord himself, not far from the obviously dead body of Bellatrix Black Lestrange.

“What’s happening?” Narcissa asked.

Draco shrugged. “Potter appeared from nowhere,” he said. “Though I don’t know what he’s waiting for. One of them should just do it.” His voice was dispassionate and Lucius worried that their son had become ruthless in his time in the Death Eaters. Proud, he expected. Superior was only to be expected of a Malfoy. Ruthless, however, was too much like Bella. Lucius did not like ruthless.

Suddenly they were accosted from behind. “What’s this?” asked a voice, and they turned to see a sword pointed at their faces, its owner – the Squib caretaker, Filch – snarling with disgust. “Death Eaters, unmarked? We might need to do something about this.”

He noticed Draco immediately reach for his mother’s wand, but he put a hand over his son’s and pulled both wife and child towards him. “We’re unarmed,” he said quickly, holding up both hands. “We just came in to find our son. We’re not here to fight.”

“A likely story,” said Filch, leering a little at them as he waved his sword around randomly. “I should take you to the Aurors. See what they think, having Death Eaters at large.”

“I think they might be busy right now,” Draco said churlishly, jerking a thumb towards the Great Hall.

“Besides,” Lucius added, pulling his family even closer as the scream of Voldemort carried from the adjacent room, “we’re not Death Eaters.” He realised the truth of the words as he said them, and a smile began to form on his lips. “Not anymore.”

The last straw

Chapter Summary

Molly Weasley

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Text in bold is dialogue taken directly from “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows”, pp 589-590, UK paperback edition.

Thanks to ericajen for her great job beta-ing this story.

With the battle raging around her, Molly Weasley felt sick. Sick because she had already lost one of her babies – the mangled body of Fred, her Fred, was lying somewhere upstairs, lifeless and cold. Sick because each and every one of her other six children was somewhere in this castle, fighting, possibly having already joined Fred among the casualties without her knowledge. Sick because she had so, so much to lose.

It had been with joy that she had learned that Percy had rejoined the fold – his absence had worn on her heart, his absolute repugnance of everything connected to the Weasley clan one of the hardest things she’d had to bear. Until tonight, that was. The loss of Fred was a pain more than she thought she could bear, and while reuniting with Percy had taken some of the pain off for just a little while, it was with a heavy heart that she saw the rest of her children re-joining the battle. Even Charlie, who she had thought was far away and safe, had been spied hurrying up the drive, eager to fight.

And now, this further heartbreak, with the death of Harry. While not of her blood, she looked on him with as much affection as anyone who wasn’t actually his mother could. Seeing Hagrid carry him up from the forest, amongst the victorious Death Eaters, had reduced her to tears, and not just from the reactions of Ron and Ginny. And Hermione, of course. Losing Harry was potentially the one thing that the resistance couldn’t survive.

But then chaos had begun, with Voldemort’s attempted torture of the Longbottom boy somehow going awry, and Molly felt her husband grab at her arm.

“Where’s Harry?” he whispered.

Confused, she looked around. Surely Harry was wherever Hagrid had left him, she thought. It wasn't as though he would have been able to move by himself, was it?

But no. As she searched the area where he should be, she realised Arthur was right. Where WAS Harry? Not anywhere near Hagrid, not being trampled on the ground, not by the pile of bodies she could see by the wall. In fact, their fallen saviour was nowhere to be seen.

"You don't think ..." she began, then stopped. No, that was stupid. Harry couldn't have somehow survived, could he? It was impossible. Yes, he had lived through the killing curse once, but even Harry, charmed life though he seemed to have in some ways, couldn't manage that feat again. And she knew that Voldemort would have used nothing short of *Avada Kedavra* – he wouldn't have risked Harry thwarting him yet again.

Arthur was shaking his head. "No, I can't see how he could have lived," he agreed, then pulled his wand out abruptly. "But we're not going to have time to think about it. Look."

Taking a deep breath and grabbing her own wand, Molly looked grimly at the approaching Death Eaters. They were busy fighting whoever was in their path, including a frightening number of teenagers who had thought they were up to a battle of this magnitude and were quickly learning they weren't. As a mother, Molly hated this, but she couldn't escape the battle. All of her remaining children were fighting, even Ginny who she had strictly forbidden to join in, and she had to make sure they had as little to do as possible.

Arthur took off to duel a huge, blond Death Eater while Molly found herself battling a dark, sullen-looking man who seemed to take delight in trying to *Crucio* her. Fortunately her years of dealing with Fred and George meant she was well versed in dodging spells, and while there were a few close calls none of them hit her. Finally she managed to hit him on the chest with a Stunning spell that knocked him down, and she bent over and banged his head against the floor a few times for good measure. Hopefully that would knock him out for a while, she thought, meaning he would miss the rest of the battle and, if by some miracle they were victorious, the Ministry could deal with him later.

If the Ministry came out of Death Eater control, of course. But she could see Arthur and Percy working together to take down the current Minister, who they all knew was under the Imperius Curse, so it looked like that would be taken care of. Briefly, between battles, her heart swelled with pride. Percy was back and was actively working with his father for good. It was as it should be.

Suddenly, though, she froze. Through the crowds she had seen her daughter, her very own Ginny, battling none other than Bellatrix Lestrange. This was the woman who could defeat Sirius Black – and while she'd had her reservations about Sirius as a person, she'd had the utmost respect for his abilities – and she was fighting GINNY? Yes, Ginny had some support, thanks to Hermione and the Lovegood girl, but Molly couldn't let this continue. She'd already lost Fred and Harry; she couldn't lose Ginny as well.

Forcing her way through the chaos, Molly got within ten feet of the duel when she saw a green flash almost graze Ginny's face. The Killing Curse, against a sixteen year old girl? That was it.

“NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!”

Bellatrix turned around and saw her and began to laugh, apparently seeing this short, middle-aged woman as less than a threat.

Molly didn't care. The woman had threatened her daughter, nearly killed her, and she was going to pay. She would not be allowed to get away with that. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned? Nay, like a *mother* scorned. That was much more formidable.

Pushing the teenagers out of the way, she entered into what had to be the most frenzied duel she had ever participated in. Moving her wand more quickly than she'd even realised was possible, she cast every curse and hex she could think of at the woman, even hitting her occasionally and stopping her in her tracks. Molly herself was also hit once or twice but not by anything that could stop her. She was more determined than she'd ever been in her life. The Lestrangle woman had to be defeated. End of story.

She pushed away some more teenagers who seemed to think she needed help. It was almost comical, the way they kept thinking she was helpless. Even as she pushed them away she kept her wand moving quickly, darting spells and curses at her opponent. The stone floor felt hot beneath her feet but she didn't care: this battle was more important than anything. Even if she died trying, she intended to stop Bellatrix Lestrangle from casting a Killing Curse at anyone else's child – or her own, again.

The Lestrangle woman smiled nastily, an ugly taunt forming on her lips. **“What will happen to your children when I've killed you? When Mummy's gone the same way as Freddie?”**

That was the last straw. Molly was absolutely determined this woman would never see the light of another day.

“You – will – never – touch – our – children – again!” she yelled, if anything gaining even more fervour for the fight. Even as her opponent laughed, Molly gritted her teeth and sent one, final curse in Bellatrix's direction.

It worked. The woman froze, realisation on her face, then fell to the ground. Shocked herself, amazed she had actually fought like that and defeated such an adversary, Molly too froze to the spot, staring at her vanquished foe.

Things seemed to happen in slow motion. The fall of Bellatrix Lestrangle, the clattering of the dead woman's wand to the floor, the hushed stares of the onlookers, the scream of Voldemort as his most trusted ally and fighter was defeated. Now it was over, Molly had no idea how it had all happened. All that mattered was that, now, her children were safe from this woman. She had succeeded. She was still a good mother.

And then, suddenly, Molly was brought back to reality by the shout of a Shield Charm, and realised belatedly that it had been placed between her and Voldemort himself. Surely he hadn't tried to kill her? Her, Molly Weasley, who had never even fought a proper duel before tonight? It was almost unheard of.

But what grabbed her attention most of all was the person who had cast the Shield Charm. Like everyone else in the room, her eyes were drawn to a tall, slight figure, with black tousled hair and glasses, pointing his wand determinedly at Voldemort.

Harry. Harry was alive. It was impossible, but it had to be true – she could see him herself, living, breathing, fighting, eyes fixed on the Dark Wizard who had, until then, been winning the battle.

Amid the stifled cheers, Molly found herself again and faded into the crowd, watching the duel that was about to take place. While realistically she knew Harry had little chance against someone like Voldemort, the fact he was even there, alive, was enough to warm her heart. There was still some hope left.

War of allegiance

Chapter Summary

The Elder Wand

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

My life has been long and stained with blood. I have changed hands more times than I can remember, drawn always to strength and determination. I have fallen in and out of human consciousness and become a myth, the stuff of legend, a bedtime story for young witches and wizards.

Yet still I am coveted, by those who know my history and my place in the Hallows, and by those who are attracted only by the legend of the Death Stick. However, something is not right with the world today. The person who wields me is not my true master.

Yes, he took me from the grave of a previous master, thereby probably believing he was committing the act of defeat. But he does not realise that this particular master was defeated already, that my allegiance was transferred to a blond boy who successfully Disarmed him. And then that boy was himself Disarmed, by someone whose presence I can sense.

My true master is near. But I cannot go to him.

The pretender who holds me is trying to cast spells, but he is getting increasingly frustrated when they do not work to their full potential. I consider helping but I am not bound to him, do not care whether his spells are successful. I seek only he who has won me, who will come to claim me when the time is right.

I play with my wielder. His spells are cruel, like many of my masters', but because I do not put my full strength into them they are easily broken. His Silencing Charm does not hold, nor does the Shield Charm he puts around his opponents. He tries, using all his force, but I defy him and make them weak. I am stronger than he.

I find the process amusing. This man is clearly frustrated and does not understand why his spells are not working. He believes he is my true master.

How wrong he is.

Eventually I find myself confronted by my true master, the wizard who won my allegiance from the blond. He is pointing a wand at me and I wonder vaguely if that wand will have any impact on me whatsoever. It does not matter, however. I will not battle against my true master. No matter what my wielder does, I will not attack this wizard. I belong to him.

It is a long time before I am called upon for spellwork. My master and my wielder are conversing, and I believe that part of this discussion revolves around me. It seems that the young wizard who won me has realised this fact and is intending to claim me. My wielder, however, does not believe this, or does not want to believe it. I notice though that he is growing weaker, that his resolve is failing. Part of him doubts his entitlement to use me, and that doubt is reflected when he does attempt to cast a spell against his adversary, my true master.

“Avada Kedavra!” He shouts the words, as though that will make up for his reservations about my allegiance.

“Expelliarmus!” my master says at the same time.

My spell – weakened, never intended to kill as I am bound to protect my master – and his meet in the middle. I recognise the force in the other spell, strong where mine was weak, determined where mine was hesitant, and make the decision to capitulate. I will not kill my own master. Instead, his spell, weaker in type but stronger in execution, will prevail.

Even I am surprised when the Killing Curse I did not intend to succeed is rebounded by the power of the Disarming Charm. My wielder stares with shock as the green light hurtles back at him, and as he falls he releases his grip on me. I am free.

Of course, I return to my master immediately. It appears he expects me as he holds out a hand and I land in it, deftly, as though I was Summoned. Once more, I am where I belong. I am with the wizard who has won my allegiance.

My journey is complete.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to ericajen for beta-ing this one-shot.

Text in bold is from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p743 US hardcover edition

The end of darkness

Chapter Summary

Fleur Delacour Weasley

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Jasmine (blueirony) for her beta work on this story.

Fleur couldn't quite believe what she was seeing. Even the Death Eater she'd been duelling stopped and stared, and while Fleur was admittedly distracted she still managed to shoot a Stunner at the black robes and knock her adversary to the ground. Normally she would have pulled off the mask to see who she'd been fighting but that could wait – she had to work out if she was dreaming or if this was real.

Still staring, she pinched herself hard on the arm. Yes, that hurt. She was definitely awake. Then how, she thought, could this possibly be happening?

First Bellatrix Lestrange had fallen, defeated by none other than her mother in law. That was a shock in itself, but it appeared that Lestrange had been fighting Ginny so Fleur could understand how Molly could have reacted the way she did. If Gabrielle had been in that situation Fleur would have done the same, and Gabrielle was only her sister, not her daughter. She hadn't yet experienced the bonds of parenthood yet but she had a fair idea of their strength.

Then, as Voldemort had noticed the death of his great warrior and let out a scream, Harry had appeared in the middle of the room. Harry. It was impossible. Harry was dead – they had seen his body. Dozens of people had almost given up at that point, until one boy about Harry's age had stepped forward and provided resistance, and that had given them all some spirit, especially when the boy had pulled that ruby-encrusted sword from the ancient hat on his head and sliced off Voldemort's pet snake's head with it. If that didn't lift people's spirits, nothing would.

But yes, there he was, seemingly flesh and blood. Harry. Wiping the sweat from her brow, Fleur just stood there and watched. Fortunately everyone else in the room was doing the same, and she didn't need to concentrate on fighting anyone. Everyone wanted to see what would happen now, with Harry and Voldemort facing each other, their wands in battle position.

Noticing some movement on her left, Fleur looked quickly around, wand out, in case it was a Death Eater making the most of the distraction. But no, it was her husband, looking a little the worse for wear but miraculously alive and seemingly undamaged. Some blood and the odd scratch, yes, but nothing permanent. Not like last time.

"Ow is eet possible?" she whispered. "We thought 'Arry was dead! We saw 'is body!"

Bill shrugged. "I thought that too," he admitted. "Looks like we were wrong."

"Eet eez incredible," she said, watching the two enemies circling each other. They were talking, too, about a wand of some sort, but she didn't know the background of the conversation and couldn't really follow it. Then again, her English was still not brilliant so she sometimes had trouble following conversations anyway.

Finally, it looked like there was going to be some action. No one in the room moved apart from Harry and Voldemort, and it felt like everyone watching was holding their breath, waiting for this to be resolved.

Fleur didn't see how Harry could get out of this alive, not realistically. Then again, she didn't see how he could be alive now, when she had seen his body earlier that night, seemingly lifeless. She still had hope, however, clutching at Bill's hand like her life depended on it.

The spells were cast at the same time – a Killing Curse from Voldemort, a Disarming Charm from Harry. The jets of light met in the middle and then the strangest thing happened – the older, more experienced, more skilful of the two, Voldemort himself, fell backwards and collapsed lifeless to the floor, his wand flying in an arc through the air and landing in Harry's outstretched hand. Fleur had no idea how this could have happened but she was relieved it did; if this was true, if her eyes hadn't deceived her, then it was over. If Voldemort was dead, then they had won.

"I cannot believe eet," Fleur whispered, ostensibly to her husband but really to no one in particular.

"I think you'll have to," Bill said, his words barely audible over the cheers and tumult caused by the onlookers, who had obviously reached the same conclusion she had. It was over.

Fleur's eyes turned to the window, where the sun had just made its first appearance over the eastern horizon. "Eet eez fitting," she said, tears of happiness in her eyes as she turned to Bill. "Zat ze Dark Lord fell just as ze sun rose. Eet eez ze end of darkness, eez eet not?"

Bill laughed, the joy on his face reflected all around them. "I can't argue with that," he said with a broad smile. "The end of darkness. It certainly is."

Torn

Chapter Summary

George Weasley

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sitting with his family at the Gryffindor table, George Weasley had never felt more alone.

Yes, he was part of a large group, eight strong among the rabble of the Great Hall, and yes, that group was united. However, it was grief that united them, grief mixed with a dash of relief it was all over, and a very small measure of euphoria that Voldemort had been defeated. However, grief was undeniably the dominant emotion, because no matter how many times George counted his family members - even accounting for the fact that Ron was elsewhere with Harry - he always came up one short.

Fred was not there.

Ginny was there, her head on their mother's shoulder, tears streaming silently down her face. Bill was there, with Fleur, his battle-scarred face weary and drawn. Charlie was there, drumming the table with his fingers, a nervous twitch that used to annoy the living daylights out of Fred and George when they were younger. Percy was there, his glasses broken, not bothering to fix them; he was staring vacantly at the wall beyond. And his parents were there, silent, stoic, their grief clearly mingled with relief that eight of their family had survived.

He knew where Fred was – his body, along with the others who had died as a result of the battle, was in a chamber off the Great Hall. George had seen him there, his eyes vacant and unseeing, the ghost of a smile still on his face. He had died in the middle of making a joke, of welcoming Percy back to the family, and now that emotion would be forever etched on his features, a ghostly reminder of what he had been.

Fred had never been quiet this long in his life, George thought vacantly, remembering the crash that had silenced his brother. Then he looked at the table, humbled, horrified by his last thought. Fred was quiet, he thought fiercely, because he was no longer alive.

It's not fair, he thought angrily, kicking the table leg by his feet. Why did Fred have to be the one to die? Why couldn't it have been me? Fred should be here now, he should be sitting here with us, he should be making inappropriate jokes about the battle and the survivors in the way that only Fred could. He should be here ...

None of the Weasleys spoke. It was like there was a silent understanding among them that

this was to be their tribute – silence in Fred's memory. And they were all suffering, but George was sure that he suffered the most, not because he was more deserving but because Fred had been like a part of him.

That was it, he understood suddenly. Now that enough time had passed for it to settle in, he knew that that gaping hole he felt was truly because Fred had held that place in him, that as twins they had shared a bond that no one else could penetrate. Even Lee hadn't been able to get inside that part of the relationship, despite being an honorary twin in so many ways. Part of George *was* Fred, just as part of Fred was George. And now, that link was broken, and could never be repaired.

George felt someone squeeze his shoulder, and looked up with damp eyes to see Bill giving him a small smile. Bill had an idea of how he must feel, he thought, and he tried to return the smile, but even that was asking too much of his facial muscles. Smiling would have to wait, he realised. Before he could do that, he would need something to smile about.

He knew that there should be some joy in his heart. While there had been casualties, they were fewer than they might have been and Harry had even come back from the dead to take Voldemort out in what was really one of the most anti-climatic duels ever seen. There had been more talk than actual fighting in that duel, and then one spell each had been enough to finish it. The implication, though, was huge – the Dark Lord, who had been ruining their lives for the past year, was dead, and the Death Eaters either killed or taken in by the authorities. He understood that very few had escaped. Light had defeated dark, just as the sun was rising (he would appreciate that symbolism more when he was less in shock and mourning, he thought), and victory was theirs. The wizarding world was now safe.

So, in that jubilation of victory, why did he feel so hollow, so empty? Dozens of people had died and he wasn't mourning *them*. Not even Lupin and Tonks, who he'd been fond enough of while they'd lived, though he might mourn them more later too. No, his heart was broken on the death of one man, so early in the battle that they'd barely even started to fight.

Silently George stood up from the table and walked slowly to the chamber off the Hall where the dead were being kept. If anyone from his family saw him leave, they left him be, possibly understanding that this was something he needed to do alone. Even Lee, who he saw out of the corner of his eye, started towards him and then stopped. He was grateful for the solitude. This was just between him and Fred.

Closing the door behind him, George took a deep breath and found the body of his brother, not far from the end wall. His eyes had been closed now, but the hint of laughter was still written on his face, and George felt himself match Fred's expression, his mouth twitching upwards in the threat of a smile.

"I'm trying to say goodbye, Fred," he said hoarsely, the words sticking in his throat, making him force them out. "You should be out there, celebrating with the rest of them. Now I have to try to figure out how I'm going to do that without you."

He paused, his eyes following the wounds the falling masonry had left on his brother's body. No one would have survived that, he thought. Even Hagrid would have struggled. Unsure if

he was taking solace in this thought or not, he looked back at Fred's face.

Fury erupted out of him, taking even him by surprise. "How could you DO this to me, Fred?" he asked, his voice loud with previously unexpressed anger and betrayal. "How could you leave me alone like this? You KNOW that I can't do this without you." He took a breath and the rage dissipated almost as quickly as it had come, leaving him exhausted and resigned.

Swallowing hard, he spoke once more, this time sounding quiet and feeble as his despair engulfed him.

"You see, Fred, that's just it. That's the problem." He paused, staring at his twin's vacant face for the last time. "I can't do anything without you."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to ericajen for her beta work and also for thinking up the story title.

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