

## CHAPTER 39

### THE SPY REVEALED

The delightful calls of the first day of spring brought a much-needed escape from the doldrums of the long winter's deep freeze. For Hannah, the welcoming relief of serving guard duty without the hassles of having to tread through endless drifts of ice and snow in clumpy rubber boots, slumped beneath thick layers of heavy woolen garments was more than enough reason to celebrate.

By late Sunday afternoon, she had the incessant urge to sneak a much-needed stroll along the outer grounds of Grimmauld. Her hankering found her swiftly excusing herself from Harry, Hermione, and Ron, all of whom had gathered around the Grimmauld living-room space, snacking on endless mounds of succulent sweets and paging diligently through the latest issue of the *Daily Prophet*.

When Hannah cleared the entryway of the secret room, she spotted Hedwig perched outside the window clicking her beak lightly against the glass and clutching a small piece of folded parchment in her right foot. Hannah raised the window to coax the snowy white owl inside and retrieved the parcel. It was a message from Severus. He had sent his request for her to meet him in the forest outside of Spinner's End. She patted Hedwig on her head, ruffled her silken feathers, and tossed her a butterscotch biscuit. Hedwig gave a soft, kind hoot and returned to her cage to nibble on the treat.

Hannah tucked the parchment into her jean pocket, snatched her cloak from her wardrobe, and hurried over to the right nightstand next to the bed. Gently nudging it aside, she lifted a narrow hatch embedded in the floorboards, revealing a small, darkened dirt-wrought space beneath it. She climbed in and flipped the hatch shut behind her, listening to the muted scratching reverberation of the nightstand as it slid back into place.

"Lumos," she whispered and the tip of her wand ignited to light her way through a winding and narrow earthen tunnel. Miles of hurried paces later, she came to the head of the cylindered corridor and tapped her wand lightly along a pattern of blue rounded stones entombed in the center of the wall, conjuring a broad marble swirled doorway. She slung the hood of her cloak over her head and pushed through the entrance. Leaning up against a wide rotting tree, opposite her, was a tall, cloaked masked man.

"Severus?" she whispered.

He nodded, pushed off the neck of the tree, and proceeded toward her.

"Hannah, how are you?" he inquired evenly.

“I-I’m alright, and you?” she asked meekly, as she stood before him, reaching for his face and smoothing the tips of her fingers kindly against his jaw line.

“I am well,” he said shortly, shrinking back from her touch. “Although, I’ve been rather busy tending to the Malfoys since Lucius’s death.”

“Yes, it was truly dreadful,” choked Hannah.

“Indeed. No doubt, Lupin is reveling in the praises of the Ministry. It’s in all the papers. I do hope you’ve warned him that the Malfoys are seeking vengeance?”

“He knows.”

“Lucky for him Voldemort still believes him to be essential to us in completing our mission. He believes Remus is hiding some important information—”

“Enough of this idle banter!” snapped Hannah. Then, gripping the front of his cloak and nestling her head in his chest, she said desperately, “*I’ve missed you, Severus.*”

He relayed to her a look of utmost doubt, swiftly easing backward to allow for ample space to colonize between him and the striking allure of her touch. Hannah frowned when she addressed the coldness in his onyx-eyed stare as he studied her intently. He had never looked at her this way before. She could see the overwhelming distance that had settled between them since their last intimate night together.

“The Dark Lord is growing anxious for the return of the locket and the ring. I do not believe we can hold him off for much longer. We must begin to hand them over,” said Severus in an odd commanding tenor.

“H-have you figured the counter curse for Harry’s Horcrux, yet?”

Snape flashed his eyes rudely at her and answered simply, “No.”

“Severus, how are we to complete this mission and both come out of it alive, unless we come up with the counter curse to remove it?”

“Perhaps you ought to ask your *fiancé* that question. Surely, he must have some idea. After all, he’s filled with all sorts of surprises, isn’t he?”

Hannah’s heart began to race and she spat out, “*What?*”

“Don’t play stupid, with me! I know about the ring, Hannah!” snarled Severus.

“What ring?” said Hannah with a sharp exhale of twisted nerves.

“The engagement ring Potter gave you! Where is it?”

“Severus,” said Hannah quietly.

“WHERE IS IT?” he said impatiently.

“I gave it back to him, Severus. I told him *no*.”

“Do you love him?” he asked quietly.

Hannah remained silent.

“I SAID, *DO YOU LOVE HIM?*” he bellowed.

“Severus, *PLEASE!* I STILL LOVE *YOU!* PLEASE! I’m doing the best I can to get through this! You must understand how difficult this has been for me! It’s been tearing me up inside being apart from you all these months!”

Severus considered her for an intense stretch before delivering his response with a biting, cold distance in his tone, “Very well, then; I shall be in touch. In the meantime, the Dark Lord wishes me to tell you that you are to carry on with your orders.” He turned swiftly and strode away from her.

“Severus, don’t go! Talk to me! *PLEASE!*” she beseeched him, reaching out for him in desperation as he apparated from her sight.

She was close to setting off after him until she checked the time on her pocket watch. It was nearing the start of her guard duty for the Order. She swiftly whirled around, re-entered the enchanted doorway of the narrow rounded tunnel, sprinted through it, and entered the secret room to find Harry heading for the kitchen staircase.

“Hey, where have you been? I’ve been looking all over for you. I was about ready to check the main corridor again,” said Harry, greeting her with the warmth of his loving embrace.

“I just felt like getting some air without Remus breathing down my neck. He only knows about the main corridor, so...”

“Are you alright?” asked Harry concernedly, having collected her visibly tense comportsment.

“Yeah, yeah, of course. You know how confining it is being hauled up in this place. But, honestly, I’m fine,” said Hannah breathlessly.

“I can’t believe it’s nearly time for me to return to the castle. Remus said I’m to leave by quarter to eleven.”

“Oh, yeah. He mentioned that to me earlier. I’m due on duty in Knockturn Alley in a few minutes. It looks as though I’ll be there until midnight, so I won’t get to see you off this time around.”

“Aw, come on. Let’s ask if you can skip duty for tonight...just for tonight,” pleaded Harry softly.

“I can’t, Harry. I’ve caused enough trouble already. I *must* follow my orders. I’ll see you tomorrow morning at seven in the common room,” she said depositing a quick peck on his cheek.

“What kind of kiss was *that*?” scoffed Harry in reproach.

“I’m sorry,” said Hannah quietly. With great effort, she planted a series of solid tender kisses onto his lips.

“I love you,” said Harry, holding onto her.

“Me too. *Now, I’ve got to go.* I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” said Hannah snappishly, pushing away from him and trailing off down the main corridor, then spilling into the dodgy darkness of Knockturn Alley.

She paced back and forth along the alleyway outside of Borgin and Burkes beneath the secluded warmth of her thick black cloak, thinking of the fight she had had with Severus. He was so harsh, so detached toward her. It crushed her to think of all of the sacrifices he had made to keep her safe throughout her life, and how horribly she had repaid him by betraying him with Harry, all because she couldn’t manage her emotional desires. She couldn’t figure out how she had let things get this far, how their once flawlessly woven plan had begun to unravel, forcing her to travel in an unexpected direction, one that she wasn’t certain if she wanted to journey more. Moreover, Severus knew about the engagement ring that Harry had given her, and according to Narcissa, Severus knew of her intimate relations with Harry as well.

Just then, Hannah was startled back into the present moment by an odd shuffling sound transpiring from the base of the alleyway ahead of her. It was too dark for her to see properly from where she was standing, so she moved in for a closer look. Slowly, she crept past a row of tarnished silver trashcans staggered along the entryway of a vacant building to her left.

“Lumos,” she whispered, holding out her wand and cautiously advancing in the direction of the commotion.

She watched as the flicker of a shadow splashed against the brick wall and vanished. There was a loud **CRASH** as one of the lids from the trashcans slipped off and turned over onto the pavement. Next, the clatter of steady footsteps began closing in on her, but

there was no one in sight. Her pulse quickened, her breath shortened while she attempted to secure the area.

”Who’s there?” she whispered out of desperation.

She felt the strong grip of a hand clap her left shoulder and another hand cup firmly over her mouth. She let out a muffled scream and someone started to whisper in her right ear.

“Hannah, it’s okay, it’s *me* — it’s me, Harry.”

Hannah swung around, watching as Harry lifted his invisibility cloak off his head.

“Oi! Potter! I was just about to hex you!” she panted, clutching at her heaving chest.

“I’m sorry. It’s just — I wanted to see you again before I left for the castle,” he said, leaning in to kiss her.

“What are you doing? *Are you mad?* Lupin must know you’ve left — The Circle of Faith, remember?”

“Broke it,” said Harry casually.

“*What?*” hissed Hannah in astonishment.

“The circle — I bewitched it — froze it green before I left.”

“How did you know —?” Hannah broke off in mid-sentence looking to him, aghast.

“Well, it’s my circle isn’t it? Since it’s my circle, I figured I could do whatever I wanted to it. It’s the other people in the circle that can’t. Isn’t that right?” pressed Harry intently.

“Harry —”

“You knew, didn’t you? You knew that I could break it,” said Harry knowingly with a sharp tinge of upset surfacing in his tone.

“Harry, you have to understand; it is my mission to protect you. I was ordered by Lupin NOT to tell you.”

“No matter. Come on,” he said, taking hold of her hand and towing her along behind him.

“Harry, I can’t. I-I’m on duty!” spat Hannah, snatching her hand away from his intending hold.

“Oh, come on, come with me. We still have a few hours before I have to leave. I want to be with you again before I go. I have Quidditch next weekend. We won’t get to truly be

alone again for a whole fortnight. Besides, there's nothing happening here and you know it."

Hannah flashed her eyes at him curiously and said, "Harry, you know we can sneak around the castle if we want to be intimate together. What's going on with you?"

"Nothing, nothing's going on. I want to be intimate with you *for real*, that's all. I want to lay with you after, not dash away to my next class after a quick shag in some ruddy broom cupboard. Let's use the corridor to get back. No one will ever know you've left your post. Come on," he said impatiently and took her hand again. Only this time, there was an uncharacteristic hint of aggression in his grasp. He drew her roughly into him, tucking her into his side, and securing her there with the strong grip of his arm. Hannah fell silent and surrendered to his strength in spite of the strange and inexplicable sense of foreboding washing over her.

She kept with Harry's pace and direction reluctantly, eyeing him over curiously as they journeyed the short distance to the corridor entrance. He released his hold on her while she tapped her wand on the wall, then he climbed through the enchanted entrance and into the corridor at her side. The instant the door closed, he lured her against it with a flood of his stirring kisses and intimate caresses. Bit by bit, he shepherded her through the corridor until they arrived at the enchanted entryway leading to the Grimmauld secret room.

Hannah closed her eyes in sweet bliss as he peeled back her cloak and traced his insatiable lips along the exposed skin of the top of her chest, up to her neck, over to her left ear, whispering adoringly into it, "*God, you're beautiful.*"

Hannah's eyes shot wide open, and then narrowed at him in abhorrence. Harry felt a sharp blow hit the center of his chest, knocking him backward. He bared a face full of total shock as his body smacked brutally against the cool rigid ground. Hannah flicked her wand at his, jinxing it out of his hand.

"What the —"

"*Show me your arm!*" demanded Hannah with her wand pointed straight at him.

"What?" said Harry, perplexed.

"Your arm! Show me your arm!" shrieked Hannah, cursing him with a series of Slashing Hexes. The expression that had begun to bleed across her face was that of an unfathomable fury. She was shaking from head to foot as he raised his right arm to her.

"Not that one! The left one, *NOW!*" she screamed, hexing him again, her voice cracking between the words.

"Hannah, w-what's going on?" inquired Harry in a stifled panic.

“Just do as I say!” she hollered, crisscrossing her wand at him, cursing him several more times with multiple Stinging Hexes across both sides of his face.

He slowly raised his left arm into the air.

“Roll up your sleeve!” shrieked Hannah.

He rolled it up.

Hannah fixed her position several feet from away from him, leaning in cautiously to examine the inside of his arm, waving her wand over it repeatedly, furiously.

“W-what are you doing? T-tell me what’s going o-on,” stuttered Harry, looking horrified for her as he watched the natural color rapidly draining from her face. Her eyes, once a lovely shade of emerald green, were now burning a horrible fiery scarlet-red with a rampant fury he’d only ever seen in one other wizard’s eyes before...

“Get your wand!” demanded Hannah.

“What?”

“Your wand!-Your wand! *Get it!*” she roared, hitting him with a Tripping Hex and sending him hurtling to the ground.

“But —”

“Just do as I say and get your wand!”

She hexed him again.

Harry scrambled to his feet and stumbled over to the spot where his wand had landed when she had struck it from him moments earlier. He reached over, snapped it up, and stood before her in a broken and bewildered fighter’s stance.

Hannah advanced on him cautiously, shaking so violently inside and out, that her voice had lost all resemblance of her own.

Now, speaking in a deep and eerie unsteady growl, she said, “*Conjure your Patronus.*”

“WHAT!” exclaimed Harry in confusion.

“You heard me! Conjure your Patronus, *this instant!*”

“EXPECTO PATRONUM!” bellowed Harry and a striking white stag erupted from the tip of his wand.

Hannah's eyes drew wide.

Harry thought she was about to faint as he bore into her mind.

"Hannah...Hannah," echoed his voice in her head. He watched as her thoughts flashed before him.

*Draco was roughing her up against the ground. He was kissing her. 'God you're beautiful,' murmured Draco as he forced his greedy hands all over her body. Hannah was thrashing around in a set of silver-banded shackles trying to break free of him. Draco was making her drink something, something bright pink. She was retching the potion out. He ripped her gown down the center. He was unbuckling his pants. He was going to...then...SNAPE?!*

"NOOOOOO!" cried Hannah.

Before Harry realized, Hannah had blasted him clear across the corridor, sending him smashing hard against the brick partition. She wheeled around and burst through the cupboard door, letting out a series of ear-piercing sobs as she went.

"HANNAH!" roared Harry, hurrying after her.

Hannah sped through the kitchen and over to the staircase, where she tripped down the stairs, and tumbled violently into the secret room, landing flat on her face with a loud **THUD**.

"Oh, no!" shouted Harry and he hurried over to her.

But, Hannah had scrambled to her feet and instantly took off at a mad sprint to reach the secret corridor within her walk-in wardrobe.

"Impedimenta!" shouted Harry.

Hannah collapsed to the ground at the foot of the bed.

"Expelliarmus!" Harry shouted again.

Hannah's wand was ripped away from her grasp.

Harry stood over her seditiously, his chest heaving as he bellowed out, "WHAT IN BLOODY HELL IS GOING ON?!"

Hannah said nothing. She remained lying face down on the hard wooden floor, sobbing and shaking violently.

“Hannah, that was the night I caught you in the pantry last summer, wasn’t it? *WASN’T IT?! You lied to me! You told me you fell! You told me you were upset with ME! You have two seconds to explain what I just saw, or —*”

Abruptly, Lupin and Tonks burst through the main door to the secret room, their wands targeting Harry.

“EXPELLIARMUS!” bellowed Lupin.

Harry’s wand was struck from his hand.

Tonks ran over to Hannah, easing her to her feet and over to the bed, holding onto her while the green-eyed beauty continued to sob out hysterically. Harry stared after all of them in shock.

“What is going on in here?!” shouted Lupin, bouncing his glance anxiously between Hannah and Harry.

Harry’s eyes darted from Hannah, to Lupin, to Tonks, then back to Hannah again. His heart was racing so fast that his breath couldn’t catch up. His thoughts were swirling in his head with the devastating effect of an epic tornado. He watched as Hannah continued to shake and sob uncontrollably against Tonks’ shoulder. In all the time he had known Hannah, he had never seen her lose control like this. He opened his mouth to speak, his voice quaking as he struggled to explain the situation.

“It’s — we were — and I saw—”

Approaching Harry with a calm and reassuring influence, Remus said, “Harry, calm down, calm down. Just tell me what happened.”

“We were just —” —He blushed severely with the delivery of his explanation— “We were kissing, and the next thing I knew, she was hexing me right and left and demanding to see my arm and my Patronus. She was acting *strange*. She started shaking and her eyes turned *red*. She wouldn’t tell me what was going on, so I tapped into her mind. I saw — I saw *Draco*. He was attacking her. Then, someone — someone stopped him...He saved her.”

“*Who*, Harry? Who did you see save her?” Lupin pressed on anxiously.

“*SNAPE!*” spat Harry heatedly.

Lupin and Tonks exchanged looks of what Harry thought was impending doom.

Hannah shot up, masked beneath a flood tears and squealed out, “I’m a *spy*, Harry! *OKAY?! Are you happy now? You discovered my secret! I’m working for Voldemort.*”

Harry stood floored and gaping in winded silence, while Lupin and Tonks hung their heads in wordless confirming nods.

“A-A SPY? YOU’RE A *SPY*?!” belted Harry.

“Yes! A double agent! I was hired by the Ministry when they discovered my private studies with Snape. They asked me to go to Snape and tell him I wanted to join forces with Voldemort, that I wanted to help him in his mission of destroying you. So, I did. On Rufus Scrimgeour’s orders, I’ve been playing both sides ever since. The images you saw earlier were from one of the nights I was ordered to go over information with Snape. Only, he wasn’t home. But, Draco was there and he was waiting for me. Snape...he rescued me...before-before Draco —”

“I don’t believe this!” howled Harry, treading the floor in righteous anger. “All this time we’ve been together and you never told me?! I can’t believe the lot of you!” Then, swinging around to meet Tonks and Lupin, he spouted off, “I suppose the both of you know her real name, too, don’t you? *DON’T YOU*?!”

“Harry —” Lupin started.

Hannah stepped forward and interjected, “Harry, only Tonks was privy to the information. I told her in strict confidence. Remus and Arthur stumbled across the information by pure accident when they were inquiring about me at the Ministry before Rufus instructed me to join the Order of the Pheonix.”

“Harry, she’s right, she —” started Tonks.

“NO! NO! *Don’t!*” Harry snarled, waving them off. “Have you all forgotten that *I’M* the one who has to defeat Voldemort? HUH? *HAVE YOU*? Couldn’t you have let *me* in on this as well? As for you, Hannah; how could you let me take the blame for that night, *eh*?! Do you have any idea how *horrible* I felt just then?! You told me you were upset with me for kissing you! I felt absolutely dreadful at the prospect of knowing that I had upset you!”

“Harry, please try to understand,” said Tonks.

“AND *YOU*!” Harry bellowed, pointing sharply to Tonks, “You carrying on, giving me all this advice about her, feeding me loads of rubbish about being patient. Yet, you knew the truth about her all along!”

“Harry, *would you shut it!*” snapped Hannah feverishly.

“*NO!* No, I won’t *SHUT IT*, Hannah! It’s *your* turn to listen to *me!*” roared Harry with an untamed, fierce, and explosive anger so bold that it struck her into submission. “*So*, tell me, Hannah, is *this* the real reason why you won’t marry me? Was all of this meant to be a hoax — you and me? Was it? *WELL*?” He began to tremble as the sound of her silence

slashed away at his insides. He felt as though he'd just been set on fire. *No, please say no*, he begged her, in his mind.

Hannah buried her head in Tonks' chest.

"Harry —" started Lupin sympathetically, reaching out to him.

"Oh, *GOD!*" groaned Harry, backing away from them in horror.

He turned to make his escape through the kitchen stairwell, but Lupin shot his wand at the door, sealing it shut. He tried to Disapparate, but he couldn't. He wheeled around and saw that Hannah was standing with her hand outstretched to him. She had blocked him from Disapparating. He started toward the main door, thinking maybe he could get out that way, but she sealed it shut. She was heading straight for him.

"Stay away from me! Just let me go!" he cried out desperately, waving his arms madly in front of him.

Hannah maintained her stride with tears flooding her face. Harry started to cry, too. He wished she wouldn't look at him like that. He just wanted her to go away. *Please just make her go away*, he thought. Then, she took him into her arms, but he wriggled free of her. She reached for him again.

"No," he whimpered.

She secured his touch and held onto him tightly.

"No!" he cried out, again, his face flushed beneath a rush of white-hot tears as his head dropping helplessly against her left shoulder.

"Harry," Hannah whispered.

"Forget it. Don't tell me. I don't want to know," whimpered Harry.

"I-I didn't mean for this to happen. It was my orders. I had no choice, Harry. Voldemort would have killed you, my lover, your friends, and me. I had to buy us more time, to guarantee that I could secure him more information by getting closer to you. Do you think it's a coincidence that everyone is still alive?"

"Ohhh!" he moaned through his tightly clenched teeth, shoving away from her. "I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU! How could you do this to me?!"

"Harry, listen to me, *please*. You must hear the *whole* truth."

"What more *truth* do I need? You're a bloody whore, do you know that?!"

“Now, Harry, that is quite enough of you!” snarled Hannah.

“No, no, it’s not! Boy, you are really are a true Slytherin! You and your speech about not everyone housed in there is evil, praising Snape as if he’s some sort of *god*! Your little, ‘*Not everything is as it seems,*’ slogan. Everything you said, *everything* was a lie!”

“SILENCIO!” Hannah bellowed and Harry became mute.

“Hannah, release that spell from him! Leave him alone!” howled Lupin.

“Shut up, Remus, or I’ll hex you, as well! I want you and Tonks to leave, *this instant!*” she demanded. She stood before the front of the main entrance to Grimmauld and opened the door for them. “*LEAVE!*” she snarled, waving them past Harry, whom they addressed with expressions of utmost shame and regret.

Once Tonks and Remus had exited the secret room, Hannah slammed the door shut behind them, returning to Harry with complete reverence toward him in every word she spoke.

“I want you to listen to me, Harry, because this is *very important*. I *do* love you. I *DO*. I started falling for you the very first night we met. Uh! I tried so hard to stop it, to deny it to myself and stay true to my lover. Only, I kept finding myself drawn to you. The first time you kissed me, I knew I was in for a hell of a fight. I kept trying to distance myself from you, thinking that if we spent enough time apart, we’d both forget about our feelings toward one other. But, it only made you more determined, which only weakened my defenses further. Then, Halloween night happened. Oh! I wanted to be with you so badly that night. Still, I pressed myself to deny my true sentiments toward you, vowing to my lover that there was nothing more than an artificial comradeship between you and me.

“Then, in December, Voldemort ordered me to break it off with my lover and get closer to you. He said I wasn’t providing any useful information about you and the rest of the Order. He blamed it on me and my lover, saying that his and my relationship was getting in the way of you letting down your defenses and trusting me enough to release pertinent secret data. He gave me an ultimatum; either I agree to seduce you and force the information out, or he would kill my lover, your friends, and me, and then he would finish his mission to get to you on his own.

“I truly believed that I could manage to keep my heart separate from the task that Voldemort set for me, until Christmas Eve. All those things you said to me, that locket, and kissing you...it was all so perfect. I didn’t mean for things to get this far between you and me. I wasn’t supposed to get *THIS* intimate with you. I was instructed to pretend to be your girlfriend, and tell you I wanted to take things slow. I was told to offer you a kiss here and there and allow for a little petting if you grew too weary. I thought I could control my physical desire for you. Then, your kisses turned into more kisses, then intimate touching. Oh! The way you touched me drove me *wild*! I wanted to be with you *so badly*, and then I *needed* to be with you. It was like...you *completed* me.”

Harry inhaled sharply upon the receipt of her words.

“Harry, I never intended to hurt you. We didn’t have all the facts that we have now to call Voldemort’s bluff and refuse his orders. At that point, we *truly believed* the only reason that your friends, my lover, you, and I were still alive was because my lover and I had made it so. Think about it, Harry! *THINK!*” she said, pulsing her wand in front of him to lift the Silencing Spell.

“Voldemort knows,” whispered Harry raspily.

“Yes.”

“That’s why he’s gone on killing anyone with any of the initials R, A, or B in their names.”

“Yes.”

“How did you find out he knows? Did he tell you?”

“No. Are you mad? He trusts *no one!*”

“Then, how can you be sure he knows?”

“I am sure.”

“How?”

“He’s got the prophecy. He has everything he needs to know how to kill you, yet he has not done it.”

“But, how did he get the prophecy?”

“I gave it to my lover and he gave it to Voldemort.”

“You took it from me that day during our Occlumency lesson! You did that on purpose!”

“Yes. I took it and instructed my lover to keep it until we needed to use it.”

“Why? Why would you hand Voldemort that information?!”

“Harry, I knew that eventually that information would come to spare all of our lives!”

“*WHAT?! How could that spare our lives?!?*”

“Stop it, Harry! Listen to me! Voldemort now knows that he cannot kill you with his wand and he knows that you know it, as well, that your wands will not work against one

another. He knows that the night he tried to kill you sixteen years ago, he inadvertently gave you the tools you would need to defeat him when he killed your mother and turned his wand on you. He now grasps just how great the sacrifice of her life for you truly was!”

“I still don’t understand how handing over the prophecy has saved our lives!”

“Harry, it bought us more time. It made Voldemort realize that you carry an unexpected power over him that could very well lead to his annihilation. Consequently, he wants to discover everything it is that you, your friends, and the rest of the Order know about his weaknesses. He knows I’m the only one close enough to all you who can aid him in his endeavors if he ever intends to come up with a plot to defeat you and remain immortal. Don’t you see, Harry? Voldemort’s panicking. He knows the secret of his Horcruxes is out and that some of them have gone missing. He cannot make any more, as there are only seven dimensions to the soul. Once parted, there is no rejoining them. Once destroyed, there is no recovering them. Voldemort knows this. Therefore, he’s instructed my lover and me to recover all of his Horcruxes, including the ring and the locket, even though the actual locket is useless, and get you to hand over the Gryffindor sword before he is fully prepared to kill you.”

“Voldemort instructed *you* to collect his Horcruxes for him?”

“Yes. However, he did not tell us what they were, or why he wanted them to be collected. We were instructed by him to take you along with us to earn your trust. That way, you would think that we were on your side. When truly, we believe he wants to see if Wes and I are aware that they are Horcruxes. He’s testing us to see what you know and if we know what they truly are. But, we have not told him the truth. If we would reveal to him that we knew they were Horcruxes, he would kill us for certain. He doesn’t want anyone to know what they truly are, not even his own followers. He merely told us that he had hidden some ‘experiments’ and he wanted us to uncover them and bring them to him, intact. The bastard didn’t even tell us how to do it. We had to figure it out on our own. Surely it was some kind of sick test of our loyalty and worth to him.”

“But, we’ve destroyed them. Doesn’t he realize that?”

“No. I can’t tell you how, but with the exception of the one planted within the potion surrounding the Slytherin locket, he still believes the others to be intact.”

“What about the Gryffindor sword? Why does he want the sword so badly if he can’t create any more Horcruxes?”

Hannah eyed Harry over intently for several moments before responding, “There are Phoenix tears in the sword, inside the center ruby. They are the very ingredients needed to make the elixir of life. It’s the only other way he can remain immortal should anyone find and destroy his remaining Horcruxes. Moreover, the sword is the only weapon that can kill him and remove him from this earth for all eternity. Voldemort knows the only

wizard alive who can handle and release the sword from the charms that secure it from being acquired by anyone else — is you, the last living heir of Godric Gryffindor.”

“Why didn’t you tell me all of this before?”

“Because the connection between you and Voldemort is stronger than you can possibly imagine. The piece of his soul that rests inside of you allows him the opportunity to access to your most intimate thoughts. Should he manage to break into your mind, he could discover that I’m actually working against him. That’s why I’ve been working you so hard with your Occlumency lessons and why I was so ruthless when preparing you for the day you saw your parent’s graves and discovered your true heritage. Voldemort has never wanted you to know of your ancestry. He has long feared that should you realize who you truly are, you would discover the secret behind the Gryffindor sword and rally together all the other heirs in your mission to defeat him — just as the co-founders defeated Salazar Slytherin, centuries ago. This is why he’s been killing off all the heirs to the school. He believes they were plotting to help you. Why do you think he targeted *you* instead of Neville when he first learned of the prophesy seventeen years ago? Because, he knew that *YOU* were the heir of Godric Gryffindor; the only co-founding member of Hogwarts who fearlessly stood up to the might of Salazar Slytherin and his dark magical practices centuries ago.

“Harry, it is important to know that Voldemort’s *pride*, his hunger for control and power is his greatest weakness, perhaps even greater than his fear of death. Therefore, we need you to appear to remain ignorant. We must use the element of surprise with him so that he does not over-prepare himself for you. You mustn’t let on that you know any of this. You’re not ready for him, yet. We must to pretend to be at his mercy. In a sense, we truly are. We’re awaiting his word for when he is ready for me to deliver you to him. We must get that piece of his soul out of you before you can finish him off, yet we still don’t know how to do it.”

Harry stared after her for a long while, feeling as though he’d nearly been drowned. The weight of his heart and of his soul was so heavy that he could barely withstand it. Yet, he had to know.

“Hannah, I need one more truth from you. Your ex-lover — are you still in love with him?”

Hannah’s eyes rested sadly on Harry, as she whispered, “Yes. It’s as I said before; we’re only apart because Voldemort has ordered us to be.”

Harry turned away from her.

“Harry,” started Hannah ruefully, reaching for him, “*that* is why I said I couldn’t marry you. What is more, you not knowing the whole truth about me wasn’t right or fair to you. Still, you need to know something very important, Harry. I have been faithful to you the whole time we’ve been together. I haven’t been with him.”

Harry snorted at her in disgust. “That makes me feel loads better. I have your body to myself, just not your heart.”

“That’s not true! You *do* have my heart! Harry, *I am truly in love with you!*” cried Hannah, grabbing him by the shoulders of his shirt.

“*But*, you’re in love with *him*, too; so I only have HALF of it,” he snapped, pulling away from her and taking to pacing the floor.

“Harry —”

“So, what is it you expect of me? Am I to hang around and WAIT while you decide which one of us you want to be with? It’s either *him*, or *me*, Hannah. You can’t have us both.”

“Harry, please don’t do this to me.”

“Do what?” he snapped.

“Don’t give me an ultimatum. I can’t make this decision right now, not until our mission is complete.”

“Does he know that you’re in love with me?”

“He suspects it. Though, I was ordered by the Ministry not to admit it to him.”

“Why?”

“I can’t tell you why, Harry.”

“*WHAT?*”

“Harry, I have my orders. I’m sorry. I can’t say why, but I’ve been told not to tell him.”

“So, then,” Harry pressed on impatiently, “what’s to become of *us*?”

“For now, we must stay together. Everything must remain the same. No one can know the truth.”

“I can’t-*I can’t do it*. I don’t want to pretend to have you when I know I truly don’t have *all* of you.”

Hannah placed her hands on his shoulders and said importantly, “Harry, this isn’t just *your* life we’re talking about here, it’s *all of us*; my lover, Lupin, the Weasley’s, your friends, me. We have to remain focused until Voldemort is destroyed. We don’t have to

do anything intimate behind closed doors, but we *must* keep everything else as it was. We must act like we're still together when we're around other people."

Harry shook his head in dismay.

"Harry, I know it's a lot to ask, and I can't force you to do it —"

"Well, what choice do I have?" he snapped. "If I don't go along with this, everyone I love will surely be killed!" He worked his way over to the fireplace, kicked the wall, and stared blankly into the flames.

"I'm so sorry, Harry," she said gently, taking hold of his hand.

"*Do you even know how much I love you?*" exhaled Harry in exasperation as he turned to face her.

Tears flooded Hannah's eyes, and she replied, "Yes, I do, and I love you just as much. My heart is in pieces over this, Harry. You cannot begin to imagine the agony —"

"STOP! Stop, right there!" choked Harry, nearly despondent and backing away from her. "Don't say another word. I can't take it. Just... don't touch me. Don't even look at me unless you have to."

Hannah hung her head low and whispered in a broken voice, "I understand. From here on out, I shall follow your lead."

Harry scoffed aloud and pitched himself onto the couch.

"Perhaps we ought to get some rest," said Hannah gently, settling beside him. "I will send an owl to McGonagall to inform her that you will arrive at the castle mid-morning. Surely, under the circumstances, Remus will approve it."

"I can't sleep, not after all of this."

"Perhaps, if I fixed you a potion?"

Harry closed his eyes and threw his arms around her. He didn't know why. Maybe, just maybe if he held onto her tight enough, everything else would fade away. This would all have been some kind of horrible nightmare, and he would wake from his dream. But, when Harry opened his eyes, he realized there was no waking. This was real....

"Oh, Harry," whispered Hannah tearfully as she held onto him.

They lay there together for what seemed like an eternity before Remus and Tonks rapped lightly on the door.

“Come in,” answered Hannah quietly.

Harry lay sound asleep in her arms.

“What’s going on, Hannah?” inquired Lupin in a soft whisper.

“Could you send an owl to McGonagall and let her know that Harry will arrive at the castle by noon time tomorrow? I think we need to give him some time,” said Hannah.

“Right,” said Tonks, with a signal of a quick reassuring nod.

“Very well, I shall inform Arthur, as well,” said Lupin with a stiff disgruntled expression of consent. Then, he and Tonks disappeared behind the enchanted doorway.