

## Chapter 31

The group returned to the manor just after midnight. The usual crack of apparition echoed off the stone walls, and nobody spoke right away. Harry kept his shoulders squared as he stepped forward, but the foul mood from the mill clung to him like damp clothes. Hermione walked close on his left, her face pale and drawn. Daphne stayed a half-step behind, her gaze downcast on the carpet. Tonks, Susan, and Fleur brought up the rear, their expressions tight and tired.

Celeste bounded down the stairs the moment they appeared, her bare feet silent on the wood. She wore that tiny red thing she called a dress, her hair loose and flowing freely down her back. A bright smile lit her face as she spread her arms.

"You're back! All six of you, looking mostly in one piece. I was going out of my mind waiting. How did it go? Did you find her? Tell me everything. I made pasta, and there's wine too. Come. You all must be hungry."

She reached Harry first, her hands coming up to cup his face like she always did. But the smile faltered almost immediately. Her eyes flicked across the group, taking in the blood on Susan's cheek, the grim set of Hermione's mouth, and the way none of them met her gaze straight on. The energy drained from her posture.

Harry touched her wrist gently. "Later, Celeste. We'll talk later." His voice came out flat. He pulled away and headed for the corridor that led to his room, his boots scuffing softly against the floor. The others watched him go. Hermione's hand twitched like she wanted to follow but thought better of it. Daphne crossed her arms, her jaw tight.

Celeste stood there for a moment before she turned to the rest of them. "What the hell happened out there?"

They moved into the sitting room. The fire crackled low in the hearth. Hermione sank into an armchair and rubbed her temples. The others settled around her. Tonks poked at the bottle of wine but didn't pour anything. It took a few minutes for them to lay it all out. The mill. The wards. The slow takedown of the patrols. The moment they got inside and saw the pens. The bodies. The room at the back that Harry had pulled from the Death Eater's mind. Hermione's voice stayed steady through most of it, but it cracked once when she described the smell.

Celeste listened without interrupting. She perched on the arm of the sofa, her legs crossed and her face calm. When Hermione finished, Celeste nodded once.

"Alright," she said. "Let me go talk to him. You lot stay here and try to eat something. He's carrying enough right now without worrying about all of you on top of it."

"We've already eaten," Daphne replied. "Not much, but we have. Don't worry about us."

“Eat properly then,” Celeste retorted with a click of her tongue.

The women exchanged glances. Susan raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Fleur looked like she might protest, but Hermione gave a small nod. Celeste stood up smoothly and walked out of the room, her steps light but purposeful as she strode down the corridor.

Harry’s door stood half-open. She pushed it wider and stepped inside. He lay on the big bed, his boots still on, and he had one arm draped over his forehead. His eyes stared at the ceiling. He didn’t move when she entered, but she knew he’d noticed. Celeste closed the door behind her with a soft click.

She climbed onto the bed without asking, sliding right up against his side without any hesitation. Her body pressed close against his, one leg draping over his, and her head tucking into the crook of his shoulder. She wrapped an arm across his chest and held him there, cuddling up.

“Hey,” she murmured. “Talk to me, Master.”

Harry stayed quiet for a long moment, and Celeste gave him time. Finally, his free hand came down to rest on her back, his fingers loose.

“It was bad, Celeste. Worse than the camps. Those people in the pens... they weren’t even fighting anymore. Just waiting to die. Kids in there too, from what I saw in his head. And that fucking room.” His voice roughened. “I felt it all through his memories. The way he enjoyed it. The rage is eating at me. Like I want to burn the whole country down just to make sure nothing like that happens again. But then there’s this helplessness. We got there too late. We always seem to get there too fucking late.”

Celeste’s fingers traced slow circles on his chest. She let her magic slip out a little, just a gentle pulse of warmth and calm that sank into his skin. Nothing overt, but just enough to ease the sharpness of despair that he seemed to be carrying.

“I know that rage,” she said softly. “I felt it for centuries before you found me. The kind that makes you want to tear the world apart because it’s so full of ugly shit. But you can’t let it own you, Master. Use it. Channel it into the next fight. Into protecting what you still can. Those people in the mill? Their suffering ends with you. You stopped it from happening to anyone else who might’ve ended up there.”

Harry let out a shaky breath. “I feel disgust too. At them, at the whole system. At myself for not figuring it out sooner. I keep seeing those faces through the slats. Empty. Like they’d already given up. And Bellatrix is still out there somewhere, probably laughing about it.”

Celeste shifted closer, her breath warm against his neck. She pushed a bit more of her magic into him now, a soothing wave that loosened the tension in his muscles. It felt like sinking into a hot bath after a freezing day.

“You’re not alone in this. Not anymore. You’ve got me. Daphne. Hermione. All of us. We’re not giving up. And yeah, it hurts like hell right now. But that’s proof you’re still human, that you’re good, and you’re still fighting for the right reasons. Remember that time in the forest with Daphne? When everything felt impossible and you still pushed through? This is the same. Fuel, not a wall. Let it burn clean.”

He turned his head slightly toward her. The arm over his eyes shifted. “It just piles up, Celeste. Every raid, every dead body. I don’t know how much more I can take before it breaks something in me.”

“You won’t break,” Celeste said firmly. She propped herself up on one elbow so she could look at him properly. Her free hand cupped his cheek, stroking lovingly. “You’re stronger than that. Stronger than any of them. I’ve seen inside you, remember? That core of yours doesn’t snap. It bends and comes back harder. And when you finally get to Bellatrix, when you end her, all this pain becomes purpose. Those prisoners didn’t die for nothing. Their memory is going to drive you straight through her.”

Harry’s eyes met hers. Some of the tightness in his jaw eased. He pulled her closer, burying his face in her hair for a second. The succubus magic worked deeper now, wrapping around the anger and softening it, turning the sharp edges into something he could hold without cutting himself.

“You’re right,” he muttered. “It doesn’t make it easier, but you’re right.”

Celeste smiled against his shoulder. “Good. Now breathe with me. In slow. Out slower. Let the rest of it go for tonight. Tomorrow, you plan the next move. Tonight, you let me comfort you.”

In the sitting room, Fleur suddenly straightened in her chair. Her head turned sharply toward the corridor leading to Harry’s room. A faint flush crept up her neck.

Hermione noticed immediately. She set her tea down and gave a small smile. “Celeste is being her usual self. Don’t overthink it.”

Fleur sighed and rubbed the back of her neck. “It still feels new to me. All of this with her. The way she just... goes to him. The energy of it.”

Hermione nodded, understanding exactly what Fleur was feeling. “It’s fair. It takes getting used to. But honestly? Celeste might be the best thing that’s happened to Harry in this whole war. She knows exactly what he needs and when he needs it. With her, there is no judgment. Just support.”

Daphne leaned back in her seat, a faint smile tugging at her lips. Susan watched quietly. Tonks stretched her legs out toward the fire.

A few minutes later, a loud moan carried from the bedroom. Clear, unrestrained, and unmistakably Celeste’s.

Everyone's heads turned in that direction. Hermione and Daphne exchanged a quick, knowing smile. Tonks grinned outright, leaning forward with her elbows on her knees. Susan and Fleur simply stared down the corridor, their expressions a mix of surprise and something else.

Tonks let out a low chuckle. "Lucky bastard. Finally getting some good luck after all the shit life's thrown at him. About damn time."

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Harry gripped Celeste's hips hard, driving into her from behind with deep, punishing thrusts. The bed creaked rhythmically under them, the wooden frame protesting as he fucked her with raw need. Celeste was on all fours, her back arched deeply and that perfect ass of hers raised high for him. Her tight, slick pussy clenched around his thick cock with every plunge, wet sounds of their raw fuck filling the room. The obscene squelches of her arousal coated him from base to tip.

"Fuck, yes, Master," she gasped, her voice husky and broken. "Harder. Use me. Take everything you need."

Harry's hand cracked against her ass cheek, leaving a red imprint that made her moan louder. Her succubus magic poured out of her in waves, invisible but potent, a pure sexual energy that was similar to and yet different from a veela's allure, one that amplified every sensation, flooding his veins with heat and turning his rage into blazing lust. She remained herself, without any physical changes, and her essence wrapping around him, making his cock throb thicker inside her, making her inner walls ripple and massage him like a living glove.

He leaned over her, one hand fisting her long red hair, pulling her head back as he slammed in balls-deep inside her pussy. His heavy balls slapped against her clit with each thrust. Sweat slicked their skin where his chest pressed against her back.

"So fucking wet for me," he growled against her ear. "This pussy is mine to use tonight."

Celeste whimpered, pushing back to meet him, her full breasts swinging erotically beneath her. "All yours. My body, my cunt, my everything. Fuck the anger out of yourself and use me. Fill me up!"

In the sitting room, Fleur suddenly gripped the arm of her chair. A flush crept up her neck, her Veela senses lighting up like fire. The raw passion radiating from Harry's room hit her hard, and it was amplified significantly by Celeste's succubus aura. It felt like warm honey pouring through her veins, pooling low in her belly. Her thighs pressed together involuntarily. She bit her lip, her facial expressions flickering without conscious thought, from a quick flutter of her lashes to her nostrils flaring slightly as she exhaled shakily.

Hermione noticed, smiling softly. "Breathe through it, Fleur."

Fleur nodded tightly, her cheeks pink as forbidden thoughts about Harry and herself emerged in her mind despite her desperate attempts not to think about him in that manner.

"It's... intense. Stronger than anything I've ever felt."

Her toes curled, and she was breathing heavily while the others either stared in the direction of the bedroom, listening, or glanced at her.

Back in the bedroom, Harry pulled out suddenly, flipping Celeste onto her back in one smooth motion. She spread her legs wide for him immediately, her knees bent and her feet planted on the bed. Her pussy glistened red, looking puffy and flushed as her juices dripped down to the sheets. He knelt between her thighs and thrust back in, burying himself to the hilt in one stroke. Her walls stretched around his girth, welcoming him with a fresh gush of wetness.

"Oh fuck me, Master!" She cried out, her long, red nails raking down his back. Her succubus magic surged, sending sparks of pleasure straight to his cock, making every inch of him more sensitive than before. He could feel her heartbeat pulsing around him, her desire feeding his own in a perfect loop.

He set a brutal pace, his hips snapping forward as he pounded her roughly into the mattress. Her tits bounced with every impact, her nipples hard and begging. Harry latched onto one, sucking hard while his hand kneaded the other, pinching the stiff peak. Celeste's back arched off the bed, a loud moan tearing from her throat.

"Yes! Suck them. Bite me if you want. I'm yours to wreck."

He did, his teeth grazing her sensitive flesh as he drove deeper, angling to hit that spot inside her that made her toes curl. The wet slap of skin on skin echoed in the room, mixed with her moans and his low grunts. Her pussy fluttered around his cock, squeezing him rhythmically as she climbed toward the edge.

Outside, Fleur shifted in her seat across the hall, crossing her legs tighter. Another powerful wave of arousal and raw passion hit her. Celeste's energy kept spiking as Harry fucked her senseless. Her breath hitched, a tiny whimper escaping her before she clamped her mouth shut. Her fingers dug into the fabric of the armchair. Susan glanced over, but Fleur waved it off with a strained smile, though her pupils were dilated and her chest rose and fell faster, her nipples visibly hard beneath her clothes.

"Keep going," she muttered to herself. "Control it."

Inside the bedroom, Harry flipped them again, pulling Celeste on top of him this time. She straddled him eagerly, sinking down onto his cock with a long, throaty moan. Her hands braced on his chest as she started riding him hard, rolling her hips in fluid circles that ground her clit against his pelvis. Her slick juices ran down his shaft, soaking his balls.

“Look at you,” Harry groaned, his hands gripping her waist, guiding her movements. “You look so fucking beautiful taking my cock.”

Celeste’s eyes were half-lidded with lust, her lips parted in a grin. “I love it. I love feeling you stretch me. Use my body, Master. Fuck me however you want.” She leaned forward, bouncing faster, her ass jiggling and slapping down against his thighs. Her inner muscles milked him expertly, her innate succubus magic making the friction electric between them.

He thrust up to meet her, his hands moving to squeeze her ass cheeks, spreading them wide as he drove deeper. The room filled with the sounds of their fucking, her wet pussy squelching loudly, their skin slapping together, and their heavy breathing turning to moans and grunts. Celeste fell on top of him after one powerful thrust, her tits pressing against his chest, and her nipples dragged over his skin with every bounce.

“Touch yourself,” he ordered.

She obeyed instantly, one hand slipping between them to rub her swollen clit in tight circles. Her moans pitched higher, her body trembling. “I’m close... fuck, Master, I’m so close.”

“Not yet,” he said, flipping her onto her side suddenly. He spooned behind her, lifting her top leg high and sliding back into her soaked heat. This angle let him go even deeper, his cock dragging along her front wall with every powerful stroke. One arm wrapped around her, his fingers finding her clit to take over rubbing it while his other hand gripped her breast, squeezing firmly and rolling the nipple.

Celeste cried out, her head thrown back against his shoulder. “Yes! Right there. Don’t stop. Fill me. Ruin me.”

He fucked her like that for a long while, relentless, his hips pistoning. The bed shook. Her pussy clenched tighter and tighter, her juices flowing freely. Her succubus energy wrapped around them both, heightening everything, from the slide of his thick cock to the heat of her walls and to the building pressure in his balls.

Fleur stood up abruptly in the sitting room, pacing a few steps before sitting again. Sweat beaded on her forehead. The wave of passion crashed over her stronger now, making her core throb and her nipples tighten even more painfully against her shirt. She crossed her arms over her chest, biting the inside of her cheek. A soft, involuntary gasp left her lips once again, and Tonks raised an eyebrow but said nothing. Daphne just smiled at her knowingly.

“She’s really going all out,” Tonks chuckled quietly.

Fleur nodded, her voice strained. “It’s like I can feel every... thrust. It’s overwhelming.”

Harry moved again, pulling out and positioning Celeste on her back once more, pulling her legs over his shoulders. He folded her nearly in half, leaning in deep as he slammed home. The new angle made her scream in pleasure, her pussy stretched wide around him. He pounded down into her, his balls slapping her ass, his cock driving so deep it slammed against her cervix with every thrust.

“Cum for me,” he growled. “Let me feel that tight cunt squeeze me.”

Celeste shattered. Her orgasm hit like a storm, her body convulsing and her walls clamping down on his cock in powerful spasms. She wailed his name, her nails digging into his arms and her pussy gushing around him.

Her succubus magic exploded outward, flooding Harry with pure ecstasy and sending another massive wave toward the sitting room.

Fleur doubled over slightly in her chair, a hand pressing to her lower belly. Her thighs quivered. She breathed through clenched teeth, her cheeks burning crimson and her eyes glassy with forced restraint. Tiny tremors ran through her frame as she fought the urge to moan aloud. “Merlin... help,” she whispered.

Harry didn't slow. He fucked Celeste through the orgasm, chasing his own. Celeste's body was limp and pliant beneath him, still twitching, but she urged him on with breathy moans. “More. Don't stop. Take me again, Master.”

He grunted before he pulled out, flipped her onto her stomach, and hauled her hips up. Entering her from behind once more, he rutted into her like an animal, fast, deep, and possessive. Her ass jiggled with every impact. He reached around to rub her clit again, drawing another smaller climax from her exhausted body.

“Fuck, Celeste,” he panted. “So good. So perfect.”

Her voice was wrecked. “Cum inside me, Master. Please. I want to feel you fill me up.”

The words pushed him over. Harry thrust deep one final time, burying himself to the hilt inside her as his orgasm crashed through him. Thick ropes of cum erupted from his cock, pulsing hard against her walls. He groaned loudly, his hips jerking as he emptied himself completely, flooding her pussy until it overflowed, his creamy seed leaking around his shaft.

Celeste moaned in satisfaction, milking every drop with her inner muscles squeezing around his cock.

Harry let himself fall on top of her and clutched her to himself firmly, his palms clutching her tits. They stayed locked together for long moments, their breathing ragged. Finally, when their breathing evened out, Harry gently rolled off her and lowered himself on the bed, pulling out of her creampie pussy with a wet sound. He

collapsed beside her and pulled Celeste close, tucking her against his chest. His heart hammered and sweat cooled on their skin as he held her close.

“Thank you,” he murmured, kissing her forehead. “For that. For everything.”

Celeste nuzzled into him, one leg draped over his, her hand stroking his chest as she smiled radiantly. “Anytime, Master. It’s a privilege to be of use to you. To comfort you like this. My body is yours whenever you need it.”

In the sitting room, the intense wave finally ebbed. Fleur let out a long, shaky breath, slumping back in her chair with her cheeks flushed and a dazed expression on her face. She ran a hand through her hair, composing herself as the others exchanged knowing looks amongst each other.

“You’ll have to excuse me,” she murmured, and without another word, she got up and gingerly walked away.

The others stared at her retreating figure before exchanging glances once again as the manor settled into quiet once more, the fire crackling softly.

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Harry woke slowly the next morning, the heavy curtains still drawn against the light. He lay alone in the big bed, the sheets tangled around his waist. His eyes blinked open, bleary and unfocused.

For a long minute or so, he just stared at the ceiling, letting the events of the previous day come back to him properly. The mill. The pens. The release he’d found in Celeste’s body. His muscles ached in that pleasant, satisfied way.

He sat up with a groan, rubbing his face with both hands. Sleep still clung to him as he swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood, stretching his arms overhead. The cool air of the room raised goosebumps on his bare skin.

The door opened quietly. Celeste slipped inside carrying a tray with a steaming pot of tea, two cups, and some fresh bread with butter. She wore nothing but a thin emerald silk robe that barely reached her thighs and was held up by spaghetti straps, the neckline barely existent. Her tits were mostly exposed, and her hair flowed loosely down her back, tousled. She looked thoroughly fucked.

A warm smile lit her face when she came in and saw him awake.

“Good morning, Master. I thought you might need this.” She set the tray on the bedside table and poured a cup for him. “The others are already up. Hermione’s buried in maps again. Daphne and Susan are drilling in the training room. Tonks and Fleur are helping organize supplies. Everyone’s moving but giving you space.”

Harry nodded, accepting the tea with a quiet thanks. The warmth spread through his hands as he took a sip. “Good. They didn’t wait for me?”

“They knew you needed the rest after yesterday.” Celeste sat on the edge of the bed beside him, one of the straps slipping down her shoulder to reveal more curve of one breast. She didn’t look like she cared, which she didn’t. “How are you feeling this morning?”

He leaned back against the headboard, letting the tea wake him properly. “Better. Clearer. Last night helped. A lot.”

He smiled, making her chuckle.

“I’m honored, Master.”

They talked for a while longer about the mill, the weight that still sat in his chest, and the bigger picture. Celeste listened, offering small touches on his arm or knee, her presence steady and comforting.

When the tea was finished, she stood and held out her hand. “Come on. Let me take care of you properly.”

Harry allowed her to lead him to the attached bathroom where she started running the large tub. Steam rose from the hot water. Celeste dropped her barely existent robe without hesitation, standing naked before him. Her body was perfect, her breasts full with pink nipples, her waist narrow, and her hips smooth that swayed as she moved.

Harry’s eyes traced over her as she stepped closer and helped him out of his sleep pants. His cock twitched at the sight of her. She smiled knowingly but kept things gentle for now. “Into the water, Master.”

He sank into the tub with a sigh, the hot water enveloping him up to his chest. Celeste climbed in behind him, pressing her naked body against his back. Her breasts molded softly to his skin as she reached for the soap. She lathered it between her hands before she rubbed it over his shoulders in slow, sensual circles.

Her slick, soapy tits slid up and down his back as she worked, her nipples hardening against him with every pass. The soft, heavy flesh pressed firmly, coating his skin in foam while her hands roamed his chest and arms.

“You carry so much tension here,” she murmured, kneading his shoulders. Water sloshed gently around them.

Harry relaxed under her touch, his head tilting back against her. “Feels incredible.”

Celeste smiled against his neck, her hands moving lower. She soaped his stomach as she descended and wrapped one slick hand around his growing cock. She stroked him slowly from base to tip, her other hand cupping his balls.

"I believe we need a more offensive approach now," she said, her voice low and intimate as her breasts continued gliding over his back. "We've been reacting, hitting camps and facilities. But the Death Eater forces are spreading. We should start choosing bigger targets, draw them out on our terms."

Harry groaned softly as her thumb circled the head of his cock. "Justify that approach for me."

She pressed closer, her hard nipples dragging through the soap. Her hand pumped him with steady, slick strokes underwater. "Because they're stretched thin too. The more we force them to respond, the more mistakes they make. We've seen it in the patterns from the wireless. Hit their strongholds directly. Disrupt their support lines harder. Make them fear us instead of the other way around."

He nodded, breathing deeper as the pleasure built. "You're right. But we all need to be stronger for that kind of push."

Celeste chuckled softly, her free hand trailing soap down his thighs while her tits kept massaging his upper back in hypnotic slides. The sensation was pure luxury, her warm, wet skin against his own, and her hand working his thick shaft with expert care.

"You severely underestimate yourself, Master," she said as she nipped his earlobe. "Think about Godric's Hollow. You and Daphne fought scores of Death Eaters by yourselves. You held off Bellatrix and even her pathetic master himself after everything you two had already been through. And you both walked away with injuries that were not hard to treat. That is not the sign of the weak."

Her strokes quickened slightly, her breasts squeezing against him as she leaned in. Water splashed over the tub edges. "You are more than capable, Master. All of you are. Daphne's precision, Hermione's mind, Susan's resolve, Tonks and Fleur's experience. Have faith in your abilities. In theirs. You've grown so much already."

Harry let out a low moan, his hips bucking gently into her fist. The combination of her words and her body was overwhelming. He turned his head to kiss her deeply over his shoulder, feeling beyond grateful to have her.

Their conversation continued in between soft gasps and her sensual ministrations. She soaped his chest again, rubbing her full tits all over him in long, sexy glides that left him slick and clean and aching.

"You're right," he said finally, his voice rough with pleasure and contemplation. "I'll discuss the offensive shift with the others soon. Today, even."

Celeste beamed, her hands and breasts never stopping their work. She stroked him faster now, pressing her body flush against his back, her nipples tracing patterns through the soap. "Good. Now let me finish taking care of you."

With that, she shifted, moving to his front to straddle his lap in the water. Her slick pussy brushed against his hard cock as she continued washing him, rubbing her breasts directly over his chest and shoulders. Soap bubbles slid between their bodies. Harry gripped her hips, guiding her movements as she ground her pussy against him slowly.

The bath stretched on like this, sensual and with no hurry. Celeste's hands explored every inch of him, her tits pressing, sliding, and massaging while she spoke more words of encouragement. By the time she finished rinsing him, Harry felt renewed, both physically and mentally.

She kissed him deeply as the water began to cool. "Ready, Master?"

Harry pulled her closer, his hands full of her ass. "Thanks to you, yeah."

Celeste beamed as their lips met in a passionate kiss once again.

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Harry emerged from the bathroom feeling more like himself, the hot water and her ministrations having worked some kind of quiet magic on the knots in his shoulders and the heavier ones in his mind.

Fresh clothes waited on the bed, clean trousers, a simple dark shirt, and his wand holster. Celeste helped him dress with the same easy intimacy she'd shown in the tub, her fingers lingering on his chest as she buttoned the shirt.

"Ready?" she asked, her eyes bright.

"Yeah." He kissed her forehead. "Let's go see the others."

She smiled and waved her hand, and a crimson dress wrapped around her alluring frame, deliciously exposed and barely covering any of her appealing bits.

Harry chuckled as they headed out of the bedroom together.

They found the others where Celeste had left them the previous night. Hermione sat at the long table, maps and notes spread out, her quill moving steadily. Daphne leaned against the same table, her arms crossed as she watched Hermione's work with sharp focus. Susan was polishing her wand at the far end of the room. Tonks was sprawled in an armchair, her boots up on a stool, and Fleur stood by the fire, unblinkingly staring into the flames.

Everyone looked up when Harry and Celeste came in.

"Morning," Harry said. He took a seat in the armchair, and Celeste quickly settled on the arm of his chair, one hand resting on his shoulder, rubbing soothing circles on the nape of his neck as she played with the hair there.

Hermione put the quill down. "You look better."

"I am," he replied. "Last night helped. A lot."

Celeste's smile widened just a bit as she kept playing with his hair.

Tonks grinned wide, unable to help herself. "Yeah, we heard. Sounded like Celeste gave you a proper workout."

"It's my Master who gives me a workout, I'll have you know," Celeste smiled, completely unbothered. A few chuckles went around.

Fleur didn't laugh though. She stayed where she had been, her posture a bit too stiff as she kept gazing into the fire. However, a faint flush crept up her neck. Her fingers tapped restlessly against her arm. The raw passion from the night before and her own thoughts kept circling in her mind, and she pressed her lips together, saying nothing.

Harry glanced at her once before turning back to the others. "The mill hit us all hard. What happened to those people... that kind of thing stays with you. But we're still here, and we need to talk about what comes next."

Daphne moved over and sat down on the couch beside him. "Agreed. We might have burned everything before we left, no loose ends, but the memory won't leave us anytime soon."

Tonks nodded, her grin fading as her hair turned a subdued brown. "I felt like we got there too late. But we can't think like that. We stopped it from happening to more folks. That has to count for something."

"It does," Susan replied. "We did what we could, and now we have to try to do better than we did before. That's all we can do."

Celeste's fingers kept moving as Harry took a deep breath and decided to plainly lay it out.

"Celeste and I talked. We've been hitting their small camps and places, reacting to whatever the wireless tells us. It's worked okay, but it's not enough. We need to push harder. Go on the offensive. Pick bigger spots and make them react to us instead."

Hermione leaned in, her eyes sharpening with interest. "And how do we do that? We don't have loads of people, Harry."

"Not yet," Harry said. "But we have something better. Each other. We've taken down dozens already. Godric's Hollow proved we can handle worse. Me and Daphne took care of a whole bunch of them and even held off Bellatrix and Tom himself for a while after everything else. We walked away. That wasn't luck. That was us."

Daphne gave him an approving smile.

Fleur turned from the fire at last. She still looked a bit distracted, but her voice was steady. "An offensive push means risks. But staying defensive lets them build more places like that mill. I agree. We strike first."

"My mum always said the best defense is a good kick in the teeth," Tonks said with a chuckle.

Susan gave a firm nod. "You have targets lined out?"

They spent the next hour going back and forth around the table. Ideas came easy once they started. Daphne suggested hitting two small spots first to pull their people out, then striking the main one. Hermione worked out the timing. Susan pointed out weak spots they'd seen before. Tonks threw in ways to confuse them with tricks. Fleur added thoughts on quiet scouting, though she still seemed a little off. Harry looked at her curiously, but she didn't meet his eyes. He filed it away for later.

"They're scared of you, Master. More than they let on. Make every move count as a warning."

Harry nodded. "Alright. We start out careful but strong. Hermione, narrow down the spots. Daphne and Susan, practice the new attack setups. Tonks and Fleur, figure out the distraction stuff. If it lines up, we move in three days."

No one argued. Everyone got up one after the other to get started on their parts.

"You sure you're up for leading this push?" Hermione asked him softly as she caught his eye.

"Yeah," Harry said with a smile. "Thanks to all of you."

She held his gaze for a moment before turning to Celeste. "Thank you. Really."

Celeste merely grinned, and seeing her with Harry like that, Hermione knew she'd been right when she said Celeste was the best thing to happen to Harry in this war.