

Ending Maker: Fate Wizardry

Chapter Intro:

*This fic's premise is inspired by the webtoon titled **Ending Maker**/엔딩메이커 by **Chwiryong** and their illustrator **chyan**. Please check them out.*

Story Starts

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Ch. 6.4 - Marauder?

I Hardly Knew Her

(4 out of 4)

According to Rin—or rather Hermione, though Harry still occasionally slipped between the names in his head—a region is considered bounded if it's entirely enclosed within finite limits or positioned within a finite distance from an origin point, thereby forming a closed shape. In simpler terms, as Harry understood it after several lengthy explanations that had left his head spinning and his tea growing cold, it was a form of barrier space that clearly defined the unnatural behaviour of the inside when compared to the natural outside.

That was at least from the perspective of the person making said bounded field. But from an outsider's perspective—someone like him trying to breach it—well, it depended entirely on the context and how one chose to interact with the boundary itself.

Let's take Azkaban as an example, as it was currently rather relevant to their immediate situation.

If you were looking at the island of Azkaban, the bounded field—or rather the ward, as wizards called it; Harry was still getting used to their terminology—had been applied to the area in such a way that made it plottable on any conventional map whilst simultaneously making it unreachable by conventional means. What you would theoretically see, if you

were a mere observer at the point the ward was deployed, was an area being compressed into a singular point. A dimensional fold, Hermione had called it, where space curved in on itself in ways that made his brain ache just contemplating. The prison existed and didn't exist simultaneously in the same physical location—present on every chart, absent from every horizon.

Yet, if you had the right kind of perception—the sort that could discern all the truths of reality rather than merely accepting the convenient lies it told—you would see something far more interesting. Reality split into two distinct layers: normal reality, where everything operated as expected, and conditional reality, where different rules applied. And if the distinction between reality and conditional reality grew too egregious to reconcile, then normal reality folded around said conditional reality as a form of correction, making the area *Unplottable*—the universe's way of papering over the inconsistency, pretending the exception didn't exist.

When an unsuspecting vessel approached the area where the island was supposed to be, it didn't interact with that space at all. It simply passed through as if that particular volume of ocean wasn't there to begin with—the ship's path bending imperceptibly around the fold without anyone aboard ever noticing the deviation.

It was like stepping over a crack in a pavement without knowing what lay between. Or, more accurately, like stepping over a crack and having the pavement quietly rearrange itself so you never even saw there was a crack to begin with.

But in essence, magecraft—or rather magic, as wizards understood it—remained a part of the natural world. It still operated within certain limits, however flexible those limits might appear. You could bend rules, twist them almost beyond recognition, stretch them until they screamed in protest, but you could never truly break them completely. True Magic aside, of course, though Hermione had been frustratingly vague about what exactly constituted that particular distinction.

'Best left to my genius half,' Harry thought, with the comfortable resignation, as he finished his cold tea at the time of the lecture.

To be honest, he'd tuned out entirely when she'd started explaining that compressing space and expanding space weren't opposite magical functions. His eyes had glazed over approximately thirty seconds in, and Hermione had noticed, and she'd thrown a cushion at his head with rather more force than strictly necessary.

'My occasionally violent and genius half,' he amended, he'd probably deserved it.

"Fuck, I think I'm going to get sick all over this bloody deck."

Moody's face had taken on a distinctly greenish tinge that Harry suspected had nothing to do with the old magic they were about to tamper with. The grizzled Auror gripped the railing with white-knuckled intensity as another wave crashed against the hull, sending spray across the deck. His magical eye, for once, had stopped its manic spinning—probably because even enchanted prosthetics had limits when their owner was fighting not to vomit.

"Are you absolutely sure this is the correct place to deploy it?" Moody shouted over the loud buffeting winds assaulting their small fishing vessel.

They'd managed to lease the boat from a remarkably incurious Muggle fisherman in Fraserburgh who'd asked no questions about their intended destination, accepted their cash payment without comment, and had probably assumed they were either smugglers or idiots. Both assumptions were technically incorrect, though Harry supposed the distinction was academic at this point.

At the helm stood Ted Tonks, looking far more comfortable than any of them had expected. The solicitor had revealed, somewhat sheepishly, that he came from a family of generational trawlermen and fishmongers stretching back to the early 1800s. So, despite his respectable legal background and comfortable office work, he had genuine experience navigating the open seas and reading the temperamental moods of the North Sea.

It was certainly better than the initial plan of commandeering an illegal flying carpet—something that had apparently been banned in Britain for centuries now due to what Andromeda had described as *'a series of increasingly embarrassing incidents involving Muggles, church steeples, and one particularly memorable collision with a hot air balloon in 1892.'*

Harry hadn't asked for details. But Ted followed up by noting that later, broom companies lobbied to keep said flying device banned to eliminate any competition.

"Yes, we've certainly passed the swell of its expanded confines," Harry called back, moving carefully towards the portside stern of the ship. The deck pitched beneath his feet as another wave struck the hull, but his reinforced body adjusted automatically, maintaining balance through shifts that would have sent an ordinary person sprawling.

"At least two of us are bloody fine in this abhorrent—" Moody shouted over the winds and crashing waves.

Harry, who had been standing perfectly still as if the violent motion didn't bother him in the slightest, suddenly lurched towards the rails and heaved over the portside deck. His sick was washed away almost immediately by another strong wave crashing against the hull.

Moody just raised an eyebrow at him.

Harry wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, adopting a blank expression as he pretended nothing had happened. He paused, his extra-sensory perception guiding him to a point that felt... different. Directly to one side, the world smelled like the North Sea—salt and brine and the particular cold wetness of deep water. To its immediate side, it also smelled like the North Sea, but at the same time, *not*. The scent was identical, yet something in it rang false, like a perfect copy of a painting that somehow lacked the soul of the original.

"T-this is approximately where the d-defined limit of the boundary exists in relation to the natural world," Harry announced, swallowing hard as he felt bile

rising again. He planted his feet firmly, willing his stomach to behave. "Give or take a few centimetres, but close enough for our purposes."

Moody's normal eye fixed on him with unmistakable scepticism, though the magical one had apparently given up trying to perceive anything useful and had rolled back to stare at the sky. "Well, if you're sure about this madness... but wouldn't the waves, or rather—" He paused, searching for the word whilst simultaneously suppressing what looked like another wave of nausea. "What's the word I'm looking for?"

"Current?" Harry supplied helpfully. "The ocean current?"

"Oh, that wouldn't be a problem at all." Harry couldn't quite suppress a small smile at Moody's bewildered expression.

"When I fashioned this particular blade with Hermione's assistance, she helped me remove the concept of fluid dynamics from it entirely." He paused, watching Moody's face cycle through confusion, disbelief, and what looked like the beginning of a headache. "Or rather, the blade simply doesn't interact with that particular concept of physics. It exists outside that framework."

"You can *do* that?" Moody's voice had gone slightly strangled.

But all Moody got in reply was Harry again keeling over the boat's rail as another involuntary protein spill had probably contributed to the nutrients of the North Sea

"Are you sure you do not want to take some medication for that?" Moody deadpanned as Harry locked eyes with Ted, who was also looking at Harry with a raised eyebrow, again wiping with the back of his hand, shaking his head in the negative as he pulled out a blade.

The blade in question was designed to fall as though it were in a perfect vacuum—no water resistance, no current deflection, no drag coefficient to speak of. It would plummet straight down through the water column at the standard acceleration due to gravity, completely ignoring the several hundred metres of seawater that would normally slow any object.

"S-so as long as I position it properly at the correct angle," Harry continued, "the blade will drop straight down without any lateral drift. And once it starts interacting with the boundary of the ward itself, we have a window of approximately thirty minutes before the blade disappears completely and runs out of its magical charge."

Moody stared at him for a long moment. His magical eye had started spinning again—probably a nervous habit, Harry suspected, like some people cracked their knuckles.

"Hmph, fine. If you're absolutely certain about this plan, then we proceed," the Auror finally growled, though his tone suggested he harboured serious doubts about every aspect of this venture. "My job of directing you to the general area of the island is already done. Whatever happens next is on your head, Potter."

"I'm aware."

It had been a few days since they'd finally convinced Moody to help them with this mad scheme—though "convinced" might have been too strong a word. "Worn down through relentless logic and the crushing weight of evidence" was probably more accurate.

They'd naturally checked whether there were any conflicts with vows he might have made to the DMLE that would prove problematic. After all, breaking a wizard out of Azkaban—even an innocent one—was still technically illegal under current Ministry law, and the last thing they needed was their inside man collapsing from oath-backlash halfway through the operation.

Which, as it turned out, wasn't something the Department required of their recruits in the first place.

Naturally, both he and Hermione had reacted with considerable scepticism to the absence of something that sounded like such an obvious and straightforward security measure. An oath of loyalty? An Unbreakable Vow not to betray Ministry secrets? *Anything?*

Hermione—and really, it was always Hermione who asked the pointed questions—had immediately enquired how many members of the Auror corps had been discovered to be sympathisers or outright Death Eaters during the previous wizarding civil war.

The answer had been... sobering. Nearly a quarter of the active force at the war's peak, according to Moody's grimly recited figures. And that was just the ones they'd *caught*. Even the Department of Mysteries had been infiltrated—Augustus Rookwood, one of the Dark Lord's inner circle, had been a member of that most secretive governmental organisation for years before anyone thought to question his loyalties.

It made Harry wonder, not for the first time, just how much rot had spread through their supposedly elite magical law enforcement. And whether any of it had been cleaned out in the seventeen years since Voldemort's first fall, or merely papered over and forgotten.

'Problems for another day,' he told himself firmly, ignoring another bout of dizziness from the pitching deck. *'Focus on the task at hand.'*

Harry pulled out what appeared to be a regular-looking blade—a basic straight design without any particular embellishments. No guard, no grip, no pommel. Just steel, folded and shaped and imbued with purpose. It looked almost disappointingly mundane, which was rather the point.

This blade, along with several more just like it stored in a mundane golf bag he'd borrowed from Ted, represented the product of weeks upon weeks of painstaking practice and refinement. The kind of work that left his hands aching and his mind numb, that had him dreaming of hammer-strikes and temperature gradations and the precise moment when metal became something more than metal.

The central problem they'd initially encountered with regard to breaking Sirius out of Azkaban had been deceptively simple to identify and maddeningly difficult to solve: magical signatures.

Every wizard left traces of their magic on the spells they cast and the items they enchanted. It was as individual as a fingerprint, as distinctive as a voice. The Ministry's Department of Magical Law Enforcement had spent decades developing methods to identify these signatures and compare them to suspects.

If Harry had simply forged these blades the normal way—letting his magic guide the process, imbuing the metal with enchantments through force of will—they wouldn't necessarily trace it to him immediately. But his magical signature would be stored and recorded, like fingerprints at a crime scene, and being identified later could prove inevitable.

The fundamental difficulty with traditional enchantment-forging was that you inevitably left a small portion of your magical signature within the finished item. Your magic helped facilitate the enchantment itself, shaped its parameters, defined its limits. That connection—however tenuous—remained.

Hermione had tried adding a timed degradation circle, something that would cause the blades to quickly break down into their constituent parts after use. But the magical residue wouldn't disperse fast enough to avoid identification—the signature would linger in the fragments like a ghost refusing to move on.

So Harry had been forced to find another way.

When properly guided by his structural analysis, he could direct his metal folding techniques to form concentric runic circles within the very core of a blade's structure. Layer upon layer of carefully shaped steel, each fold pressing microscopic channels into the metal that would later serve as pathways for magical energy. It was similar, in principle, to how Damascus steel achieved its distinctive patterns—except instead of merely affecting appearance and durability, these patterns served as functional magical circuitry.

The runic circles themselves were Hermione's work, of course. She'd spent three weeks designing them, drawing on her previous life's knowledge of

Tohsaka family magecraft and the experiments she'd conducted since awakening in this reality. It had helped that Harry had purchased several books on arithmancy, runes, warding, enchantment, potions, and magical theory for her—though those had been rendered somewhat redundant once they'd gained access to the Black family library. By then, however, she'd already finished the core designs.

But what Harry needed to accomplish was achieving the same result without any guidance from his magic whatsoever. No structural analysis to show him the imperfections. No reinforcement to steady his hands. No magical enhancement of any kind.

Just muscle, memory, and the hope that he'd practised enough to get it right.

In the end, he'd been forced to choreograph every single step. Every precise strike of the hammer, every minute adjustment of angle and force, every careful manipulation of the forge's temperature. He'd spent hours planning each blade, days memorising the exact sequence of movements required, and weeks practising until he could execute them perfectly even in complete darkness, with no magical assistance whatsoever.

It was, he'd reflected more than once, probably the most tedious thing he'd ever done.

The physical toll had been substantial—without reinforcement, his body was merely human, and human bodies weren't designed for the repetitive stress of forge-work at this intensity. At least with Andromeda's healing and his own limited regeneration, he'd been able to continue without extended breaks. His hands had still ached for days afterwards, though. Some prices couldn't be magicked away.

But in the end, each blade had emerged from the process exactly as designed. And once properly formed, he would simply leave them in a magically saturated area to slowly absorb ambient magic over time.

Places like the room containing the lodestone of Gringotts were ideal for this purpose—a natural focal point that interacted with the magical ley lines of

Britain. Harry had asked Director Ragnok if they could place the blades in that particular room, as he certainly wasn't allowed to learn of its precise location himself. The goblin had agreed readily enough, probably amused by the novelty of a wizard requesting access to their most sacred space for something as prosaic as *leaving swords to marinate*.

In the end, through this laborious method, you'd obtain a magically neutral yet thoroughly enchanted blade that bore no trace of its creator. It could have been forged by anyone. It could have been forged by *no one*. And that ambiguity was precisely what they needed.

This particular blade—the one he was about to drop into the depths of the North Sea—had been specially designed to delicately tweak the boundary limits of a ward structure. Not puncturing a hole through it per se, which would trigger every alarm in Azkaban and probably summon half the DMLE, but rather lifting it up temporarily. Like taking a careful peek beneath a curtain without tearing the fabric itself.

Ten minutes. That was how long the enchantment would last before the blade exhausted its stored magic and crumbled to dust.

It would have to be enough.

Harry locked eyes with Ted as the boat was already being manoeuvred to face the precise direction they needed. They were going to push onwards to approximately a kilometre or two west of their current position—partly because the additional distance would provide a clearer line of sight to the prison once it became visible, and partly because Harry didn't particularly fancy being anywhere close to the ward lines when they initiated this part of the plan.

Ward boundaries, when disturbed, had a tendency to react unpredictably. And knowing his luck, 'unpredictably' when dealing with a prison designed to contain Britain's most dangerous criminals could mean anything from mild magical interference to reality-warping backlash. Better to observe from a safe distance.

There was also the matter of Azkaban's patrol schedule. Moody had provided detailed information on the guard rotations—gleaned from old DMLE records and cross-referenced with the shipping manifests for supply deliveries—and they'd timed their approach to coincide with the gap between the evening and midnight shifts. But even so, Harry didn't want to test his luck by lingering within potential detection range any longer than absolutely necessary.

With a steadying breath, he dropped the blade over the side, watching it disappear beneath the dark waves without so much as a splash. The enchantment was working—the water simply parted around it as though the blade existed in a different layer of reality entirely, which, in a sense, it did.

Ted immediately throttled the engine up properly, and the boat surged forward, cutting through the choppy waters with purpose.

Harry moved towards the stern, his mind automatically beginning the countdown.

He knew from their preparation that the North Sea at this particular location was approximately seven hundred metres at its deepest—easily confirmed through a quick search on Google, courtesy of Hermione.

Since the blade had been specifically designed to ignore fluid dynamics entirely, it would behave as if it had been dropped in a complete vacuum. No water resistance. No buoyancy effects. No turbulence from currents or thermal layers. Just pure gravitational acceleration—approximately 9.8 metres per second squared—pulling it inexorably downward through the water column.

Well, they'd find out soon enough.

Eleven seconds or sooner after the drop. That was when the blade should make contact with the ward boundary, assuming Moody's figures were accurate.

'Eleven...'

'Ten...'

'Nine...'

Moody was already at his side, positioning himself carefully just behind Harry as they faced the stern of the boat. The grizzled Auror stood ready to grab Harry and haul him bodily back aboard if he should accidentally lose his footing and fall overboard in the choppy seas. His magical eye had stopped its usual manic spinning and was fixed intently on the water below, though what it could perceive through the interference of the wards was anyone's guess.

'Eight...'

Harry extended his left hand outward over the dark water as he began to trace the familiar form of *'his'* bow in the air before him. The bow materialised gradually, standing as tall as Harry himself, constructed from a distinctive alloy that had originated in Archer EMIYA's future timeline—from before that version of the hero had accepted Alaya's deal and become a Counter Guardian, eternally bound to humanity's collective unconscious.

It was heavier than it looked. More solid. The kind of weapon that had been designed to shoot projectiles far heavier than a regular arrow.

'Seven...'

Reinforcing his body with a surge of magical energy that flooded his muscles and bones, Harry felt his perception sharpen, his reflexes quicken, and his strength increase to levels beyond what an ordinary human could achieve. Every fibre of his being became stronger, more resilient, more *ready*. The cold spray of the ocean no longer bothered him. The pitching of the deck beneath his feet became predictable, manageable, irrelevant.

'Six...'

His fingers closed around the first arrow from the golf bag Ted had lent him. The metal sang against his skin, vibrating with contained power.

This was it. No turning back now.

'Five...'

'Oh, that particular place must be shallower than we initially thought.' Harry thought as the space before him suddenly distorted, reality itself seeming to ripple and fold as the ward line raised itself like an enormous curtain being drawn back. The effect was eerily beautiful—one moment there was nothing but grey sea and greyer sky, and the next moment there was *more*. An island materialising from nothing, dark and jagged and wrong in a way that made Harry's teeth ache.

And upon it stood a building that seemed to radiate despair even from their increasing distance.

Azkaban.

The prison existed now where moments ago there had been only empty sea, and the sight of it struck Harry like a physical blow. The fortress was a monolithic tower of black stone, weathered by centuries of salt wind and dark magic.

Even at this distance, even with the buffer of open water between them, Harry could feel the wrongness radiating from the fortress. The dementors' influence wasn't strong enough to truly affect him yet, but the pressure was there—a constant, hateful whisper at the edge of his awareness. He pushed it aside. He had a task at hand.

The boat was still speeding away beneath them, Ted handling the vessel with confident competence. The deck pitched and rolled with each wave, but Harry's reinforced body maintained perfect balance, his feet adjusting automatically to the shifting surface, his previous dizziness forgotten.

With his enhanced eyes—pushed far beyond normal human capability through sustained reinforcement—he could see the barred windows of the high-security cells clearly despite the distance. Small rectangles of absolute darkness, each one a glimpse into a life of endless torment. He counted them automatically: twelve windows on the upper level, eight on the one below, four on the isolated wing that Moody had identified as the location for the prison's most dangerous inmates.

Sirius was in that wing. Third window from the left, according to their intelligence. Sharing a wall with Bellatrix Lestrange's cell, which was either cosmic irony or deliberate cruelty on the Ministry's part.

Harry nocked the first arrow against the bowstring, feeling the tension build in the weapon—not just physical tension, but magical as well. The bow wanted to fire. It had been created for conflict, shaped by legends of war, and it recognised the approach of battle with something almost like eagerness.

He forced himself to pause. To breathe. To ensure his first volley was perfect, because there would be no second chances.

The first few arrows were specialised tools rather than weapons—designed specifically to release a hypnotic sound pitched far outside the range of human hearing. Below twenty hertz, in the infrasound range that humans couldn't consciously perceive but that affected them nonetheless. The kind of frequencies that induced unease, disorientation, and—when properly calibrated and magically enhanced—immediate unconsciousness.

Typically, most wizards would probably resist this sort of thing through sheer magical resistance. But these prisoners had spent years—some of them nearly two decades—in the most prolonged and intense exposure to dementors imaginable.

Any magical or mental resistance was gone at this point.

Dementors didn't just feed on happiness. They fed on the soul's vitality, on the fundamental life-force that powered magical ability. Every day in Azkaban was another day of being slowly drained, another increment of magical capacity permanently lost. The prisoners who'd survived the longest were, paradoxically, the most vulnerable—their defences worn down to nothing, their ability to resist external influence reduced to merely human levels.

Harry felt a twinge of something that might have been pity, quickly suppressed. These were Death Eaters. Murderers. People who had tortured and killed for pleasure, who had followed a madman's vision of magical supremacy with gleeful enthusiasm. They deserved no sympathy.

But Sirius had been here too. Innocent Sirius, falsely accused Sirius, who had endured the same soul-draining horror for seventeen years.

Harry released the first arrow.

The bowstring sang against his bracer as the projectile vanished across the water, too fast to track even with enhanced vision but he knew his arrow stuck true, even with the bobbing of the sea vessel he was on the only factor that could make him miss. But this was one of the few things he was confident in and he had no doubt on the results as he nocked the next arrow.

He sent a volley of the same arrows in rapid succession, each one aimed at a different window, each one shooting through iron bars with supernatural precision that owed nothing to chance and everything to his skill, something he'd easily gotten the hang of in this second life of his.

Pushing arrow after arrow through windows barely visible even to his enhanced sight, making absolutely certain that every prisoner in the high-security wing fell into deep, dreamless sleep—everyone but one.

He couldn't afford for anyone to raise an alarm. Not yet.

At first, Hermione's plan had been brutally simple: kill two birds with one stone.

The high-security wing of Azkaban contained Voldemort's inner circle—the Death Eaters who would inevitably be broken out when their master returned, who would resume their campaign of terror with all the sadistic creativity of those who had been given decades to nurse their hatred in darkness. Bellatrix Lestrange. Antonin Dolohov. Rabastan and Rodolphus Lestrange. Names that still made veteran Aurors flinch, that still haunted the nightmares of those who had survived their attentions.

They were right there. Defenceless. Unconscious. It would be so easy.

A single volley of arrows through their cell windows, each one carrying a lethal enchantment, and half of Voldemort's projected forces would be eliminated

before he even had a body to return to. Strategic. Efficient. The kind of cold calculus that won wars.

But Ted had argued vehemently against it.

"If you want Sirius's status as an innocent man to be legitimised properly in this country," the solicitor had said, his normally mild voice carrying an unusual edge, "if you want this to actually work in the long term, you absolutely must not stain it with unnecessary deaths. The moment you kill those prisoners—even those prisoners, even in their sleep, even in the name of preventing future atrocities—you become criminals. And everything else you've accomplished becomes tainted by association."

Hermione had bristled at the lecture, her Tohsaka pride offended by being told what she couldn't do. But she'd listened. And after three days of argument, counter-argument, and legal precedent cited at increasing volume, she'd grudgingly conceded the point.

They needed legitimacy more than they needed efficiency. They needed to play the long game, to build a coalition of allies who trusted their methods as well as their goals. Murdering helpless prisoners—however deserving those prisoners might be—would undermine everything they were trying to construct.

So instead of assassination, they'd settled on misdirection.

The plan required selling a convincing narrative: someone with a deep, burning grudge against Sirius Black had attacked Azkaban. Someone who wanted the supposed traitor dead rather than merely imprisoned. Someone whose vendetta was personal enough to risk attacking the most secure facility in Wizarding Britain just for the chance to kill one man.

Let the Ministry chase that phantom. Let them investigate a crime of passion whilst the real perpetrators vanished into the shadows. And meanwhile, Arcturus had already arranged a special ad hoc committee with the International Confederation of Wizards that would examine Sirius's case

properly—outside British jurisdiction, outside Ministry influence, outside the reach of anyone who might prefer inconvenient truths to remain buried.

Of course, the plan to literally maim Sirius was something they might have deliberately *forgotten* to mention to Andromeda. In Hermione's words: *'Better to ask forgiveness whilst supplying bottles of restorative potions, blood replenishers, and Wiggenweld, than to ask permission and be told no.'*

Harry raised another arrow, this time something different from the sleep-inducing projectiles he'd fired before.

Like all the previous arrows, this one would break down into its constituent parts after a few minutes—leaving behind only mundane materials that could have come from anywhere. It was a necessary precaution. Once Harry used his ability to trace swords and fire them as projectiles publicly, anyone with half a brain would connect the dots. Sword-arrows were a rather distinctive calling card, magical signature or not.

Attached to the shaft was a note instructing Sirius to stay clear of the prison wall. And that note carried a specialised enchantment: a subtle hex that would induce a paper cut on whoever touched it.

It sounded almost comically mundane, like something from a prank shop rather than a prison break operation. But the seemingly minor injury was linked to a special ring—another one of Hermione's increasingly brilliant designs—that would track the victim's exact position with pinpoint accuracy.

They needed to know precisely where Sirius was standing when the wall came down. They couldn't afford to bring rubble crashing onto his head after going to all this trouble.

The arrow flew straight and true, vanishing into the darkness of Sirius's cell. Harry waited, counting seconds, until he felt the ring on his finger grow warm—confirmation that the hex had triggered, that Sirius had touched the note, that they now had a precise magical lock on his location.

The next set of arrows were concussive, designed specifically to break through reinforced stone without bringing down the entire structure. Harry had spent considerable time calibrating the explosive force—too little and the wall would merely crack, too much and the entire wing might collapse. The margin for error was uncomfortably narrow.

He let them loose in successive fashion, his movements smooth and practised despite the urgency pounding through his chest. One arrow to crack the surface. A second to shatter the weakened stone. A third to blast the debris outward, away from the cell's interior, clearing a hole large enough for a man to fit through.

Through his enhanced vision, Harry watched with painful clarity as Sirius's cell wall gradually broke apart. Stone and mortar crumbled away, ancient masonry that had stood for centuries reduced to rubble in seconds. Moonlight spilt through the widening gap, illuminating a figure who stood frozen in obvious shock.

His godfather—his father's best friend, the man who should have raised him, who had instead spent seventeen years in this hellhole for crimes he hadn't committed—looked skeletal and broken. His hair hung in matted tangles, his prison clothes were filthy rags, and his face bore the hollow-eyed expression of someone who had forgotten what hope felt like.

Harry tightened his jaw, his teeth grinding together as guilt and determination warred within him.

'Seventeen years. Seventeen years of this, because Dumbledore couldn't be bothered to ask questions.'

The next arrow would hurt. It *had* to hurt—that was the entire point. They needed the appearance of violence, the evidence of attempted murder, blood on the walls to sell the narrative of a vendetta taken to its logical extreme.

But knowing it was necessary didn't make it any easier.

Harry's final arrow flew straight and true, embedding itself deep into Sirius's right thigh.

Arterial blood immediately sprayed across the grimy cell wall in a vivid arc of crimson, painting a scene of violence that would convince any investigator. Sirius's face twisted in shock as he stared at the spurts of blood—the pain probably hadn't registered yet, his body too stunned to process what had just happened.

A twinge of guilt formed in Harry's chest at the sight of subjecting an innocent man to something this traumatic. But it had to be done this way.

'I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. But this is the only way.'

Just before Sirius collapsed from blood loss and shock, his body going limp, he simply disappeared.

The arrow served two functions. The first was a portkey—one of the most heavily regulated magical items in existence, and one of the hardest to create without Ministry oversight. This particular portkey jumped between predetermined locations in rapid succession: a random point in the North Sea, then a rooftop in Glasgow, then an abandoned warehouse in Berlin, then a random space several kilometres above sea level off the coast of Portugal. Four intermediate stops, each one leaving a false trail for anyone trying to track where the portkey's passenger had ultimately ended up.

The second function was medical. The moment the portkey activated, it would also trigger a dose of the Draught of Living Death imbued into the arrowhead—placing Sirius into immediate suspended animation. His heart would slow to nearly nothing, his blood loss would cease, and his body would hover in stasis until Andromeda could properly treat him.

It was brutal. It was necessary. And it would keep him alive long enough to reach safety.

The final destination was a safehouse in France, far outside British jurisdiction, where Andromeda, Hermione, Arcturus, and their ICW contact

were already waiting. Emergency medical supplies had been prepared. Seventeen years' worth of suppressed maternal fury at what had been done to her cousin had *also* been prepared, though Harry suspected the former would be deployed before the latter.

Sirius would live. He would be healed, rehabilitated, debriefed, and prepared for his eventual appearance before the ICW tribunal. And when he finally stood before the international wizarding community with Peter Pettigrew's confession as evidence, Wizarding Britain would have to acknowledge what it had done to an innocent man.

Harry finally breathed a deep sigh of relief, his shoulders sagging slightly as the crushing tension began to ease. He'd achieved the first crucial step after months upon months of careful preparation, planning, and worry.

'One down. Now we just have to—'

"Incoming!" Moody's gruff shout cut through the night.

Harry's head snapped up. Several black, wispy figures were bursting forth from Azkaban's structure, their tattered cloaks streaming behind them as they rushed towards their vessel with terrifying speed.

Dementors.

The cold hit him first—a bone-deep chill that had nothing to do with the North Sea wind and everything to do with the metaphysical wrongness of creatures that existed only to consume joy. His occlumency shields strained under the pressure as whispered memories clawed at the edges of his consciousness.

Fire. A city burning. Bodies in the—

No.

Harry immediately traced several Black Keys into existence—the conceptual weapons of the Church's Executors, simple in form but devastatingly effective against spiritual entities. He handed two to Moody, who accepted them with

only a raised eyebrow and a grunt that might have been either acknowledgement or complaint.

"Blessed weapons," Harry said shortly. "They'll most likely work with creatures like this."

"Magic," was Harry's deadpan reply to Moody's unvoiced sceptical question.

The lead dementor was almost upon them, its faceless hood yawning open to reveal the void where a mouth should be. Harry felt the cold intensify, felt his happy memories trying to slip away like water through his fingers.

'Cold,' was his last coherent thought as he swung a blade towards the flying abomination.

The Black Key bit into something that shouldn't have been solid, and the dementor screamed.

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End

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