

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Checking in on Fleur and then back to Harry~

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“-and I’ve made it abundantly clear, mama! I’ve all but tried to serve myself up to him on a silver platter! But he still refuses to take me to bed!”

As Fleur says this, she throws her hands in the air and then slumps back onto the chaise lounge she’s sat upon with a put-upon sigh and a heartfelt groan. Across from her, Apolline frowns as she considers the issue.

“... Truly? He’s had no reaction to your allure?”

Fleur shakes her head.

“Non, mama. Not that I can see anyways. But to be fair, that isn’t to be unexpected... he’s clearly an exceptionally powerful wizard, as I already told you.”

The Delacour Matriarch nods at that, though she still looks a little incredulous at what Fleur described happening in the depths of Gringotts. To be fair, Fleur can understand her mother’s disbelief. After all, if she hadn’t seen it with her own two eyes, she might not have believed it either.

Harry hadn’t just been able to defend himself from the goblins who sought to attack him down there in the depths of the bank... he’d outright massacred them. Goblin Warriors wearing Enchanted Runic Goblin Armor had been pasted in a single second. Not only should that have been impossible under Gringotts’ wards and other varied magical defenses, but the goblin armor itself should have protected against wizard magic... that was the entire point of it!

But no. Harry had shown himself to be singularly above the likes of any other wizard, witch, or goblin in that moment. He'd taken down his enemies quite easily and made vaunted goblin security look like it was paper mâché.

Fleur had told Apolline all about that of course, speaking with pride as she espoused her new Lord's virtues to her beloved mother. Apolline in turn had... not quite called Fleur's claims bullshit, but it was clear she wasn't entirely convinced Fleur wasn't just talking a big game.

Still, the Delacour Matriarch is clearly willing to take at least some of what Fleur has said on faith, because she seems focused on helping Fleur with her current issue.

"... Perhaps he does not swing our way, my dear daughter. It's entirely possible that you aren't going to be able to get anywhere with him if he is only interested in his own gender."

The problem is, Fleur had been in the middle of imbibing a gulp of wine when her mother decided Harry must be gay. She at least manages not to embarrass herself by spraying it all over Apolline like a complete moron, but it still winds up going down the wrong pipe, causing Fleur to choke mightily as she beats her upper chest with a fist.

"Fleur? Are you okay?!"

"I-I'm fine, mama. I just... ahem, it went down the wrong way. But... no. I can say with certainty that Lord Hallows is NOT gay. Very much not so, in fact."

Needless to say, Fleur hadn't told her mother everything that had happened to her. In fact, she'd left most of the raunchy stuff out, keeping it focused on how Harry rescued her from the goblins, destroyed her contract with fiendfyre, and then offered her a job. She'd also mentioned the visit from the Minister and her Senior Undersecretary, though she hadn't gone into detail on what had happened there.

All in all, Fleur knew deep down inside that Harry would probably have his way with her any time she asked. In fact, he'd offered to do so for her just last night before he went to handle Amelia Bones and Penelope Clearwater. It was Fleur's decision not to take him up on that offer.

Of course, now that she'd fucked up so severely with Penelope, Fleur's turn might be on the backburner for a while longer... but all of these are things that the part veela decides to keep to herself. Her mama doesn't need to know everything to be able to give her advice, after all!

"Hm, well if you're sure... then I suppose the only thing to do is to continue providing stellar service as his employee and see what comes next. You know you don't HAVE to bed your rescuer, Fleur."

Fleur rolls her eyes.

"Mama..."

Apolline promptly raises her hands in surrender.

"I'm just saying!"

Yes, well... veela, and especially Delacour Veela, had a long and storied history of latching onto worthy men. Fleur's grandmother, for instance, had been rescued by her grandfather from a black market that had captured her and intended to sell her to the highest bidder. Even Fleur's mother Apolline would tell you that she'd married Fleur's father because she accidentally fell overboard on a boating trip and he jumped into the water to fish her back out.

And if nothing else, Lord Hallows was as worthy of a man as her grandfather and father... perhaps even more so, she can't help thinking.

"You know he's likely not long for this world if the curse in Great Britain remains true, Fleur. If he truly refuses to leave the British Isles behind, he'll probably be dead within the month... if not the week."

Fleur grimaces. She wants to tell her mother she's wrong, to say that she has full faith in Harry... but working as an 'intern' at the Gringotts in Diagon Alley had given her a unique, extremely depressing perspective on the tragedy that had befallen Magical Britain. Never mind her own personal loss when Bill died, she'd been a part of more meetings than she could count between goblin bankers and grieving witches.

Sure, many of those witches were just faking their tears while trying to see what wealth they could get from the primarily wizard-owned accounts their spouses, fathers, and children had left behind... but plenty weren't. Plenty were genuine in their heartbreak and Fleur had had a front row seat to watch as the goblins somewhat gleefully let them know there was nothing they could do to access their family's wealth.

So yes, she knew better than most how fast things had gone bad in Magical Britain. How many wizards had died so very quickly. Her mother... was probably right that Harry was in grave danger. And yet...

"H-He's different, mama. Whatever it is won't be able to kill him as easily as all the others."

Apolline scoffs and shakes her head.

"They said the same thing about Albus Dumbledore my darling, and look what happened to him. Best not to get your hopes up, Fleur. I know that he saved you regardless of potential embellishment and I'm glad he didn't let you swear a life debt... enjoy your time with him while you can and then come home to us when it's over."

Fleur sighs at the certainty in her mother's voice. Not 'if he dies'. But rather 'when it's over'. Still, she knows Apolline is speaking from a place of love so-

"FLEUR!"

Before she can finish that thought, the doors to the sitting room are flung open and a silver-blond missile comes shooting in. It's been so long since Fleur laid eyes on her little sister. Gabrielle Delacour isn't so little anymore though. She's a woman grown now, an adult in her own right.

She zeroes in on Fleur almost instantly and before Fleur can so much as rise from her sprawling position, Gabrielle is on top of her, hugging her desperately, sobbing into her chest.

Fleur smiles and runs a hand through her sister's hair as she returns the embrace.

"Ello, Gabrielle... I'm glad to see you too."

... Maybe Harry was right. Maybe she did need this more than she had realized.

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With a flick of the Elder Wand, Harry cleans the blood off of his chest. Luckily, the Dark Magic used to kill him hadn't done any actual damage to his shirt. Physically, the only damage had been to his body, which of course had 'healed' in full once he came back to life.

Then, he sets about casting some rather ancient protection spells that will defend him against such attacks going forward. Even if he'd just come back from the dead, it's not like he wants to keel over and die again repeatedly, especially not in front of anyone.

Luckily, Harry can tell that the ritual was a temporary connection and nothing permanent. In order to make something longer lasting, they would need an effigy of him that was far better constructed and with far more thought put into it than a simple magical picture in a newspaper. He almost hopes they do go that route when they find out he survived, because even a proper effigy won't allow them to strike at him now that he has these protections in place.

After finishing up with that as well as making himself presentable, Harry gives Death one last look before heading for the door. She just giggles some more, clearly knowing everything but not about to tell him anything... which to be fair, was because he'd ordered her not to.

Locking up his new property behind him, Harry heads down the street towards the Ministry, ignoring the numerous eyes that fall upon his person. Its not suspicious that all of these witches are staring at him after all... he is the first wizard that many of them would have seen in years.

Still, to be attacked like that... well, it spoke to true malicious intent behind the death of all those wizards. Admittedly, Harry already could have guessed as much... but this attempted murder was still very, very revealing.

For one, he highly doubts that whoever is behind all the killings really used the same ritual they just used against him for every single wizard in the British Isles. There was simple no way that they went through that sort of rigmarole thousands upon thousands of times.

Besides, if every wizard had died like he just did, then there would have almost certainly been a better understanding of what was killing all of them, rather than it being this mysterious curse that had everyone so spooked.

No... today's attack was opportunistic and slap-dash in Harry's opinion. To him, it smacked a little bit of desperation... or possibly exasperation.

For a moment, he tries to put himself in the killer's shoes. You've been murdering wizards in Great Britain for eight years without fail and without being caught. You've left things in such a state that no foreign wizards even dare to show up on these shores anymore and the ICW is on the verge of forcibly isolating the British Magical Community.

And then... Harry shows up. This random fucking wizard comes out of nowhere. And not just a wizard, but a proper Lord with a claim to seats in the Wizengamot and untold amounts of wealth as well.

Letting him live was never an option for whoever the killer truly was. However, them going about it this quickly in this fashion was once again either a matter of desperation or exasperation. Did they do it so quickly because they were afraid that his continued survival would ruin whatever their future plans were? Or did they act in such a reckless manner because they thought themselves untouchable?

Either way, they'd definitely overplayed their hand just a bit. Revealed themselves more than they probably intended. And that... that would make them all the more desperate going forward, wouldn't it?

Harry can't help the grin that spreads across his face as he finally enters the Ministry Atrium. Again, he draws eyes as he goes, every witch in the massive hallway stopping to stare at him once they notice there's a bonafide wizard in their midst.

Before any can work up the courage to approach him however, Harry has already reached the Atrium's help desk, where a witch sits staring at him with wide eyes. Truth be told, he doesn't recognize her... but that doesn't stop Harry from giving her a broad smile anyways.

"Hello there, good day to you."

"G-Good day um..."

"I'm Lord Harry Hallows, my dear... but you can just call me Harry."

She blushes profusely at that and Harry wonders just how weak the witches of the magical world were to flirting after years of no interactions with the opposite sex. He can't help but be a little amused by how quickly he can reduce a witch to a stuttering, stammering mess.

"I-I... w-what c-can I do for y-you, L-Lord Hallows?"

Hm, no Harry? Shame that. Still, he forges on ahead all the same.

“Well my dear, I’ve come to the Ministry on this fone day to alert the proper authorities to my purchase of a property on Diagon Alley and my intentions to open a business there. I hoped to register that business here at the Ministry post-haste. Could you direct me to the proper Department for such things?”

The poor witch’s mouth opens and closes as she just stares at him wide-eyed, clearly not quite sure how to answer him. Whether that’s because of who he is or because she doesn’t know the answer, Harry couldn’t say. It could be both.

In the end, he never really finds out because before she can find her voice again, she’s cut off by the ding of the nearby elevator. And stepping out is a familiar face.

“Lord Hallows, welcome to the Ministry. Right this way, please.”

Harry raises an eyebrow as Penelope Clearwater gestures for him to come with her.

“Hm. I was hoping to get my business registered, Senior Undersecretary. As well as see about getting my new fireplace connected to the Floo Network and my property filed under my name. Can you help me with those things, Ms. Clearwater?”

Far from being dissuaded, Penelope simply nods her head.

“I can, Lord Hallows. We can take care of all of those things in my office.”

Heh... alright then.

“Lead the way then, Ms. Clearwater.”

They both step into the elevator together and a moment later the doors close and everyone who has been staring at him from across the entire length of the Atrium is cut off from their view. As Harry and Penelope have a moment alone, he’s not surprised when she immediately looks to him with pursed lips.

“... It seems that the Daily Prophet decided not to run with any... embarrassing stories about me or the Minister in their Special Edition today. Would you know anything about that, Lord Hallows?”

Ah, that explains why Penelope was so eager to get him alone, heh. Inclining his head, Harry smirks.

“I would say... the likelihood is low that either the Prophet or the Quibbler will go after you for any... embarrassment that happened this morning. I can't promise it of course, but it should be... taken care of.”

For a long moment, Penelope is silent. Then, she lowers her head and whispers out two words as they arrive at Level 1.

“Thank you.”

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A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!