

Alternate Ending to Alone

Harry sat on his couch, a bottle of beer in one hand as he glanced through the paperwork surrounded him. He'd put Sammy to bed a few minutes ago, and was enjoying the silence.

His introspection was ruined by a knock on his door. This was surprising because not many people ever used his door - especially not at this time of night.

He opened it, and to his surprise, was a Ministry official he didn't recognise, accompanied by Percy Weasley.

"Perce?"

"Sorry to disturb you so late, Harry," Percy said with a sigh. "This is important."

"Really?"

Percy nodded. "This is my colleague, Gerald Hopkins from the Department of Hatch, Match and Dispatch."

"Is this about the babies?" Harry asked, looking worried.

"I wish it was," Gerald said solemnly. "You are a remarkably difficult man to get hold off," he said with a sour look at Percy. "I do not usually come accompanied, but access to you is strictly controlled."

"I know," Harry agreed. "I arranged it that way. Well, you better come in."

"What is it, Uncle Harry?" Sammy asked from the top of the stairs.

Harry looked at Percy who shrugged. He held up his arms and Sammy flew down the stairs and hugged him.

He carried her into the living room and sat down. "So, what's up?"

"Draco and Cho Malfoy were found dead yesterday."

Harry raised his eyebrows in surprise. "And you're here because?" he asked coldly.

"Oh, sorry, we do not suspect you," Gerald said, holding his hands up. "It's to do with Mr Malfoy's will."

"Oh?" Harry asked again.

Gerald reached into a briefcase and pulled out a sheet of paper and handed it to Harry.

Harry took it and started to read, adjusting it so that Sammy could as well.

"Potter,

If you're reading this, I'm dead.

I always wanted to start a letter like that for some reason.

Yes, I am scared, but I've had enough of that rather fine whiskey of my father's to allow me to delude myself into thinking that you will never read this.

Normally I'd pause now to allow you the chance to do a jig of glee, but you're far too damn heroic to feel pleasure in our passing, especially as we're all still quite young.

So, you're wondering why I'm writing to you now. Two reasons.

One: No one else on the planets going to be able to avenge us. Everything i know, that I've been up to is going to be given to you. There will be some clues as to who would want to kill us. I swear, Potter, that I've been keeping my nose clean. Unfortunately, I've inherited a series of unsavoury legacy problems from dear old dad.

Two: And this is much harder to ask. The best day of my life was when Cho gave birth to Natalie. Natalie has been everything to me for the past few years, as much as Cho herself has. Having your own child is amazing, seeing your own genes and knowing that you have a future. I can't express the pride of watching her perform her first stumble, or her first accidental magic. And she is so beautiful.

Will you please look after her for us.

I know that you'll raise her as a damnable Gryffindor.

So why am I asking you, of all people?

Well, to start with, you are, again, the only person alive who can guarantee my daughter lives to grow old.

You are one of the few people who will not hold the grudges that you, and everyone else, has against me, and the Malfoy name.

I know my daughter will be safe with you, and that you are the picturebook definition of honourable.

Please, Harry, I'm begging (again) look after my daughter, and make sure that whoever killed us never ruins another family.

I know you don't care about money, but I'm leaving you everything anyway. Do what you like with it, as long as Natalie is looked after properly.

We never got on, Harry, and as I've grown up, I've found myself regretting that. Not much, but a little.

Please, Harry.

Draco Malfoy"

Harry whistled softly and felt Sammy hug him hard. "Are you going to do it, Uncle Harry?" she asked.

"What would happen if I don't?" he asked Gerald.

"She would go into an orphanage, made a ward of state, her assets would be seized and run by the Ministry."

"I'll take her," Harry said with a sigh. "Not that I have much choice."

"You do, Harry," Percy said softly. "But its not a good choice. You do know that all of us will help."

"Thanks," Harry replied. "I'll need it."

"So am I getting a new sister?" Sammy asked.

"A five year old, yes."

"Cool!" Sammy grinned. "I'll be able to teach her all the important things!"

Harry laughed softly. "So you're going to help out as well?"

"Of course," she said firmly. "Natalie's going to be missing her mummy and daddy a lot. She'll need lots of love and care."

"You are right, Samantha," Percy said solemnly. "And that's a very adult response."

Samantha beamed proudly.

"If you'll sign here, Mr Potter," Gerald said. "We'll get the ball moving."

"Does it normally happen like this?" Harry asked, as he read the document giving him guardianship over Natalie Malfoy.

"No," Gerald said firmly, with a look at Percy.

"I might have pulled a few strings," Percy said absently.

"A few?" Gerald asked. "He ran roughshod over all our rules and regulations, and I do not like working this late at night!"

Percy sniffed apologetically. "The Minister has already signed his part Harry, so everything is above board. The Prophet has been given the key facts and a warning not to embellish."

"Thanks, Perce," Harry said as he signed the form. "Where is she?"

"At the Ministry, waiting for you. I've got a Portkey."

"Go and get dressed Sammy," Harry said to the small girl in his arms.

She nodded and scampered out the way.

"How did they die?" he asked.

"Badly," Percy sighed. "Ginny was one of the first Aurors there. It was messy, but Natalie was unconscious, she doesn't appear to have seen it. They were brutal, Harry. It took both of them a long time to die."

"Any clues?"

"A few, but we are hoping that Malfoy's documents will help."

"I'll want control."

"You've already got it. Kingsley and the Minister have agreed that for the duration, the entire Auror core is yours."

Harry nodded.

"Why are you doing this?" Gerald asked. "You were never close to the Malfoy family."

Harry looked at him. "Because it's the right thing to do," he said firmly. "Ready?" he asked as Samantha bounded into the room.

She nodded.

Percy held out an old tin can, and they all touched it, Harry with his arm around Samantha.

They arrived at the Ministry, and Samantha was surprised at just how busy things were at this time of night. It was exciting to still be up, and meeting a new person was good too.

Uncle Harry was in his hero-mode and it always made her excited. He wasn't upset or angry, he was just calm, but everyone did what ever he said instantly. She loved it when he was like this, because it was proof that Harry was the bestest wizard in the whole world.

She followed Harry as they walked down a dark corridor.

"Where is she?" Harry barked.

"In there," the old and fat wizard replied, pointing to a cell door.

"Exactly why did you feel the need to keep her in a cell?" Harry asked in a quiet voice.

She watched as the fat man paled and stuttered out an answer.

"Percy," Harry said.

Percy nodded. "Go and wait in the Ministers office, Forkwith," he commanded.

"But..." the wizard said, before stopping as Harry glared at him.

This is what she loved to see more than anything else. Uncle Harry making everything alright.

Harry opened the door, and in the corner was a small girl with long black hair. She was sobbing quietly and cuddling a blanket. She wanted to run over and hug her, but decided not to. Uncle Harry would make everything alright.

She watched as Harry walked over and dropped to his knees in front of the girl. "Hi, Natalie," he said gently.

Natalie looked up at him and studied his face for a second.

Harry raised his hand and brushed back his hair, revealing his scar.

The girl stared at it for a second and then launched herself forward into his arms, crying harder.

"Do you want to give us a few minutes, Perce?" Harry asked.

Percy nodded. "I'll start sorting out the rest of this mess," he agreed. The Weasley walked out, followed by Gerald.

Natalie sniffled a few times and then pulled back. "Daddy said that if anything happened to him and Mummy that you would be my new daddy?"

Harry nodded.

Samantha walked forward and lightly took the girls hand. "Harry is the bestest wizard in the world," Samantha said reassuringly, dropping the uncle. "I'm Sammy, I'm going to be helping take care of you."

The girl looked at her and nodded. This close, Sammy could see that she had grey eyes.

"Mummy and Daddy are gone aren't they?" Natalie asked.

"I'm afraid so," Harry said as gently as he could.

Fresh tears ran down Natalie's face. "No one talked to me," she mumbled. "I was scared."

"You're safe now," Samatha said, patting her back. "Harry is the bestest wizard in the world."

"Are you going to avend..avnge..."

"Avenge?" Samantha asked.

"Yeah, that," Natalie said. "Are you gonna do that to the bad men who got Mummy and Daddy? Daddy said you would."

"I am," Harry agreed.

Natalie nodded and then burst into tears again. "I miss Mummy," she wailed.

"I know, sweetheart," Harry whispered, hugging the girl tightly.

Samantha moved and joined in the hug.

She felt so sorry for the little girl, and was determined to make her happy. But she couldn't help a little fission of guilt at the small joy she felt. Harry was going to be this girls Father, and that meant that she could be her Mother. She would have an excuse to go around to Harry's all the time - and surely it wouldn't take long for Harry to realise she loved him and would be with him for ever.