The End

The frayed edges of an extremely worn invisibility cloak trailed along the rubble-strewn path. Though older than the wearer, it still managed to fulfill its function. Just. Even though it had been looked after almost religously, the magic was failing. It wouldn't last much longer. Only days, if not hours. It was the last invisibility cloak in the world.

Over the last few decades, invisibility cloaks had become the most valuable item a wizard could possess. The correlation of survivors to owners in the wizarding world approached unity towards the end of the war. But, just as every magical defense had eventually been overcome, so too did the cloaks' ability to hide the wearer at close range. Out here, in the Scottish wilderness, there was noone within earshot, leaving the wearer relatively safe.

As useful as it was, keeping its owner hidden from sight, it was useless in keeping anyone from hearing the heavy panting and wheezing emenating from underneath. More than once on the relatively short journey, the hidden figure stopped to catch his breath. He did this with a fair amount of bemusement. As a student, he had run along the entire length of this path without difficulty.

Under the cloak, the figure clutched his heart, feeling the organ strain under the load. He paused and glanced up at his destination, a crumbling, mostly ruined castle. He glanced behind, looking down at the remains of what was once the only wizarding village in the UK. Now, not a single building stood. The place had been razed to the ground with ruthless efficiency.

The man felt one more twinge in his chest, more painful than the others. It wouldn't be long now. His death was near.

In a way, he welcomed it. Harry Potter was tired of being lonely.

The ancient castle's magic was nearly gone. The original wards, laid down by the founders themselves, were the only functioning wards remaining in the entire world. Though describing them as functioning was a stretch. Harry grinned to himself in a humourless way. This close to them, he could feel their drain on his power.

He welcomed the feeling of using his magic. It had been decades since he had felt safe casting spells. When your enemy could track the use of magic from halfway across the country, one tended to become more than a little judicial when it came to expending power.

Slowly, Harry made his way towards the ruins of Hogwarts, eventually picking his way through the remains of the front gate. Originally a hundred feet high and braced with dozens of enchanted metal bars, they had fallen quickly in the battle, allowing access to the heart of the school.

Now, the pitiful remains of the doors hung on rusted hinges, rotting away quietly through the years. Harry's shoes made clear footfalls on the stone floor, the sound echoing through the entrance hall like a fading dream.

Even after all these years, Harry's eyes flickered around, searching the hallway for the irritating poltergeist, Peeves. He shook his head to clear it. Instincts you developed while at Hogwarts generally served you well as a student. But there was no need for them now. Peeves was gone.

Harry slowly resumed his journey, picking his way around the rubble that covered the floor. Without moving staircases, it took him far longer to reach his destination than he expected, but he eventually stood in front of a statue of a gargoyle, mentally trying to guess what the password was.

Minerva had changed it, as was her right after taking over as Headmistress after Snape was killed. But she hadn't had the chance to confide it with anyone before Hogwarts was overrun. Harry reached out and touched the statue, trying to get a feel for the shape of the magic ward.

He smiled to himself, realising exactly what Minerva had done. The woman knew that the office behind the gargoyle was the central pillar of Hogwarts' power. It needed to be protected beyond the defences of the castle. The invaders could have stood here with a dictionary and read out every word in existence, and they wouldn't have been able to pass.

Harry took a deep breath, and let it out, turning the last of the breath into a poor mimic of a cat's meow.

It was close enough for the gargoyle, which shifted aside with a stony grinding.

"Potter!" spat the portrait of Severus Snape, the second last headmaster of Hogwarts. "What are *you* doing here?"

The other portrait occupants blinked themselves awake, coughing and blinking as though they had been asleep for sixty years. Many called out a greeting, several babbling questions.

Harry ignored both the caustic welcome and the warm greetings, moving around the enormous desk to sit in the chair behind, groaning with discomfort as he lowered his century-old body into the chair, then sighing with contentment at the comfort it afforded him.

Harry's eyes came to rest on one empty frame, and he chuckled softly to himself, then laid his head back against the soft leather. "Damn you, Dumbledore. Where are you?"

A soft panting came from the frame, and a slightly flushed Albus Dumbledore appeared, dressed in pyjamas with a night hat on. The bobble bounced around as though it had a life of its own. "Harry? Is that really you?"

Harry's eyes flickered open, and he gave a snort. "Who were you expecting?"

Dumbledore's eyes flickered over him. "You've aged terribly, my friend."

Harry grunted as Snape snapped, "Get out of my chair, you ungrateful brat!"

Harry lazily rolled his head around to glance in Snape's direction, and gave a small sigh. "Snape, for once in your life, or unlife, whatever, just don't talk to me, eh? You ignore me, I'll ignore you, and we'll all get along swimmingly."

Snape's portrait sneered, opened his mouth to deliver an acerbic reply, but Harry was quicker. With a casual wave of his blue-veined hand, Snape was silenced.

A murmer of approval greeted this action. While Snape's portrait reddened alarmingly, every other painting on the walls of the office politely applauded his actions. "Thank you, young man," said a witch to whom Dumbledore would have appeared to be a youngling. "Severus has been most difficult to put up with for the last few years."

Harry nodded wearily, waiting for the applause to subside. "I can imagine."

Dumbledore's eyes crossed as he focused on the swinging bobble, and he snatched off the had with a slightly embarrassed expression. "Harry, what on earth has happened? Hogwarts has been empty for years!"

Harry drew in a deep breath, closed his eyes and let it out slowly. "We lost," he said softly.

"I beg your pardon?" Dumbledore queried.

Harry's eyes slowly opened. "We lost. The war. It destroyed us all."

Dumbledore paled. "Voldemort succeeded?"

Harry gave a snort, which turned into a coughing fit. It took him several minutes to recover after letting the fit pass. "No, old man. The wizarding world discovered an enemy infinitely more powerful than Voldemort who hated us even more."

Dumbledore paled further. "Who?"

Harry slumped down in the chair. "Muggles, of course."

"Muggles? But they don't even know of our existence for the most part!" blurted one of the portraits.

Harry nodded sadly. "I know. That's partly my fault. Voldemort was becoming more powerful, and had started targeting Muggle-borns and their families. Fudge refused to offer them any protection whatsoever beyond what they could muster themselves." Harry looked over at Snape, who was turning a shade of purple found only on those who are about a minute away from suffering an aneurism. "That was of course after my seventh year. After Voldemort killed you, Albus."

Dumbledore looked down for a second. "What happened?"

Harry sighed deeply, an expression of self-loathing on his deeply aged face. "It was after Hermione's parents were murdered. The Ministry weren't interested in cleaning things up, they were just interested in covering their arses. They planted evidence at the scene making it look like the Grangers were drug dealers, and the act of killing them was blamed on local addicts."

Several portraits coughed and spluttered, the odd "Outragous!" getting through the cacophany.

Harry sighed again. "Hermione and I decided to act by ourselves, to bring our plight to the Prime Minister himself. We hid under my invisibility cloak and sneaked into Number 10 when the door was opened. He nearly had a heart attack when we pulled off the cloak. Once we calmed him down, we explained our side of the story.

"It turned out that Fudge had been feeding him a steady stream of 'All's well', and he didn't believe us. It was only when I showed him my pensieve that he finally decided to summon Fudge to get an explanation."

Harry coughed softly, remembering the incident. "It was Hermione who saved the day. She suggested getting an aide to sit under my cloak and film the meeting on a video camera. Fudge arrived, flanked by a pair of aurors, and flatly denied everything we'd showed the PM. He had the aurors cast memory charms on those present, and escorted both Hermione and I to the Ministry holding cells to await trial.

"Well, it turns out that the hidden aide showed the PM the video, who then flew into a rage at being manipulated."

Dumbledore looked troubled. "But, surely the Muggles didn't just declare war on just that?"

Harry shook his head. "Of course not. But since there was effectively a civil war going on under his nose, he acted as he saw fit. He summoned every wizard who worked for his Muggle government, and they stormed the Ministry building, ejecting Fudge and installing a magical government that could react to threats such as Voldemort."

Gasps of shock echoed around the room. Harry grimaced at the memory.

"It might not have been so bad if one politician ordered a thorough investigation into the Wizengamot's voting history. He claimed it was to discover exactly who was to blame for the poor record of action when required, but it turned out that he was one of the more rabid anti-magical fanatics out there."

Phineas blinked. "Why on earth would that be a problem? He may well have identified problems that could have been fixed."

Harry scowled at the Slytherin Headmaster. "Don't you remember the vast number of anti-Muggle laws that were proposed? Like Muggle-hunting?"

"But they were all voted down!"

Harry rolled his eyes and waved the objection away. "So? It just proved to the world that there was a large group of people who could travel instantly from country to country at will, change memories effortlessly, and who hated Muggles, or at least viewed them as animals to be hunted for sport. With an upsurge in all sorts of religious fundamentalism sweeping the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was simple for the world's leaders to turn their populations against the wizarding world."

"Dear Lord," whispered Dumbledore.

Phineas shook his head. "No, I don't believe it. A single, well-trained wizard is more than a match for any number of Muggles."

Harry gave him an incredulous look. "Have you not heard of firearms? Guns?"

Phineas waved away the question. "Bah! Foolish things. They take an age to get ready to fire and are woefully inaccurate. Not to mention that a simple shield charm protects from such a weapon. They may be devastating to Muggles, but they are nothing more than an annoyance to a wizard."

Harry shook his head sadly. "Ah, you mean muskets. The Muggles have come on a bit since then. Even when I was a student here, nearly a hundred years ago, they had guns that could shoot thousands of bullets a minute, bullets that would rip through a row of houses, let alone a shield charm."

Phineas swallowed at that. One other witch cleared her throat. "And now, young man? What sort of guns do they have now?"

Again, Harry sighed. "Guns aren't the half of it. There are satelites in orbit around the earth that can do anything from pick out a person in a crowd and kill them without giving those nearby anything worse than sunburn, to devestating an area the size of a city. But handguns have progressed to the point where instead of traditional lead bullets, they fire slivers of aluminium at mach ten. One round can rip through a crowd of people and continue on its way without slowing. Tactical nuclear weapons can be carried in one hand," Harry listed, before realising that most of his audience wouldn't recognise the name. "Um, a few nuclear weapons would be like a reductor curse that could level the entire country."

Every one of the portraits were white, all of them looking like ghosts. Phineas spoke up, his voice trembling. "Surely we would have known..."

Harry barked a laugh that contained no humour whatsoever. "Of course you did. Muggle-born students were entering the wizarding world every year. But the Wizengamot was so insistent on keeping only pure-bloods in power that those who knew what Muggles were capable of were ignored. More than half the wizards in the world died in the first few days of the war because they stood in front of a row of Muggles with guns expecting their shield charm to protect them."

Harry shook his head and looked down at his hands. "It was a massacre. Tens of thousands of wizards and witches worldwide were slaughtered. There were those who fought back, but there were just too many Muggles."

Silence descended on the room as the information was digested. Harry leaned his head back against the chair again, tears welling in his eyes as he remembered. Harry's face twisted into a vindictive smile at one memory. "The wizarding world was fractured, unable to form a united front. There were three distinct groups. Voldemort, Fudge, and the DA, which included nearly all of the Muggle-born. We tried everything we could to stop the killing, to get a ceasefire. It took a long time, but eventually we managed to get the important leaders of the world into one place to sign a peace treaty, but Fudge got wind of the meeting and panicked. He and Voldemort formed an alliance, joining the remenants of the wizarding government and the Death Eaters into one force to take the fight back to the Muggles. They attacked the conference, killing both the Prime Minister of the UK and the President of the United States. Even though I personally killed both Fudge and Voldemort, that was it, as far as the rest of the world was concerned."

"No quarter?" Dumbledore wheezed, his voice hoarse.

Harry shook his head. "That one attack sealed the fate of the rest of us. All magical folk were regarded as terrorists, and marked for death. It became legal in many countries to hunt down wizards, the ultimate irony."

Phineas finally found his voice. "How did they know? If you wore Muggle clothes, they wouldn't know!"

Harry frowned at him. "Many tried. Many succeeded too, at least to begin with. Did you know that Muggle scientists have mapped out the entire human geonome? The list of instructions built into our very cells? Well, about forty years ago, some bright spark found what Muggle military folks had been searching for. The gene sequence that defined a wizard."

"Gene sequence?"

Harry shook his head. "Nevermind. Just know that the entire list of instruction on how to build you is stored in each cell of your body. Everyone is unique, with a different set. Part of that list gives one the ability to manipulate magic. Muggle scientists found it, and that changed everything."

"How?"

Harry coughed again, feeling his chest constrict. "Fear of us made it easy for governments to convince people that a world-wide DNA database was needed. An archive of the entire world population's genes. They screened everyone on the planet to find out who had the 'magic gene'. Even squibs and the parents of Muggle-born, whose 'magic-gene' were recessive, were discovered, and either killed or forcibly prevented from procreating."

Phineas shook his head. "No, there were far too many safe places for this to have happened. I refuse to believe it."

Harry eyed him carefully. "Have you any idea just how much magic there is in the world?"

A murmer of confusion answered him.

"The amount of magic is linked to the magic in all the magical beings in the world. As the Muggle world discovered how to detect magic, they killed more and more witches and wizards, not to mention magical beings. As more and more died, the amount of magic in the world decreased, causing protective wards to collapse, anti-Muggle jinxes to fail, and revealing entire communities to the Muggles. Ghosts faded out of existence, even Peeves has disappeared. Hogwarts is the only magical building still standing."

"Then why is no one else here?" demanded another wizard. "If Hogwarts is still safe, why have we been alone for the past decades?"

Harry growled softly. "I didn't say Hogwarts was safe, only that it was standing, and even that description is a stretch. It was first overrun forty-five years ago, and reduced to nearly ruin. It was only the fact that the founders were clever enough to link the wards to the power of entire wizarding population that they are still intact."

"H-H-Hogwarts is gone?" Dumbledore whispered.

Harry nodded sadly, tears gathering in his ancient eyes. "The Muggles killed everyone they could find. Teachers, students, even the magical creatures, all the way down to flobberworms." Harry took a deep breath. "Hermione and Ginny died trying to convince an army commander that the group of Muggle-born students under their care were not a threat. Ron was killed when he attacked that same brigade three days later." Harry gave a snort. "He did manage to kill the entire command structure of that brigade before being killed himself. His sacrifice allowed us to get about twenty students to safety."

Harry took a deep breath, his lungs rattling softly. "Remus was killed on the full moon, when he went berserk after not having his potion. Tonks blended in well for a while, spying for me, but was eventually discovered and executed by the Americans." Harry smiled ruefully at one memory. "Though Malfoy's expression when a dozen bullets tore through his shield was amusing," he finished softly.

Dumbledore's expression was one of horrified disbelief. "What of Minerva?"

Harry shook his head. "She took over as Headmistriss after Snape died, but didn't get to even see her first year before Hogwarts was overrun."

All the portraits began speaking at once. "What about.." "What happened to..." "Is my Grandson alive?"

Harry held up a hand. "Don't you get it?"

The portraits silenced, but both Phineas' and Dumbledore's expressions morphed into horrific realisation.

"They're all dead. There are no more wizards. There are no more witches. I'm the last. The last of our kind."

A long silence greeted that proclamation. Harry took the opportunity to lean back in the chair and close his eyes. He had exerted himself greatly getting here, and could feel his heart straining. A tiny object attached to his belt vibrated sharply, and he nodded with resignation.

With a wave of his hand, Harry took off the silencing charm from the portrait. While his use of magic had obviously been detected, by removing it from Snape it would take the military a little longer to locate him.

"You are the last wizard alive, Potter?" Snape screamed, causing a tiny smile to touch the edges of Harry's mouth.

"You sound disappointed, Snape. Think of it like this. You'll get to see me die. Your life will be complete."

Dumbledore blinked. "You're dying?"

Harry sighed. "Everyone is dying, old man. But I've been a fugitive for decades. I'm the most wanted man in every country on the planet."

"What for?"

Harry coughed, more violently this time. "Apart from being a wizard, you mean? Probably for protecting those who have a recessive 'magic-gene', I'd say. I did all I could to try and rebuild our world, trying to get those who carried the right genes to procreate, against the laws at the time. The few who agreed were hunted down with me, the few magical babies born were all killed before their first birthday." Harry looked up and around at the portraits. "The magical world thought it could remain separate from the Muggle world. But intolerance, suspicion and fear are powerful motivations to kill someone who has abilities you can never have. Casting that spell on Snape alerted the military to my location. They'll either be here soon in person, or they're aligning an assassin satelite above me. Once I pass on, so will all of you. There will be no more magic in the world left to support you."

The portraits babbled amongst themselves. "Can't you escape?" asked one.

Harry shrugged. "Of course. But why? For what purpose? We're all dead. There is not a single person on the planet capable of having magical offspring, at least not for three generations. I'm the last. There is nothing left to fight for."

Dumbledore nodded slowly, the most defeated expression on his face I'd ever seen. "Then we are all lost."

Harry nodded, noting absently that the object on his hip was vibrating alarmingly. His location had been pinpointed from orbit. "Yes, old man. This is the end. I've been alone for too long." Harry's voice grew thick. "I miss them all. Hermione, Ron, and Ginny. Tonks and Remus. The DA. I can't keep going on. I've done my best, but it wasn't good enough."

"Don't blame yourself."

Harry swallowed, moving his dry throat. "I don't, not really. There are so many 'what if's' that share the blame around nicely. But I'm tired. I want it to end. I want to see my friends again. I want to see Sirius again."

Harry paused as the air grew heavy. He looked up at the stone ceiling, blocking his vision from the doom descending from above.

"My parents," he whispered. His last words.