

Who You Gonna Call?

Ron pushed open the door of the basement kitchen at number twelve. "We're back—hey, cornflake bars!" He grabbed one of the sticky treats off the plate and took a huge bite. "Fanks, Harry," he said through his mouthful.

"You're welcome," said Harry from the counter, where he was finishing cutting up another pan's worth of bars.

Ron swallowed. "There's cornflake bars down here!" he shouted towards the stairs.

"Don't yell!" Harry hissed in a stage whisper, making frantic shushing motions with the hand not covered in marshmallow and butter.

"Sorry." Ron stood up and went to the door, which swung open before he could reach it. "You heard?" he asked Ginny, on the other side.

"I heard. So did everyone else. They're on their way."

Ron looked sheepishly at Harry.

"I think it's all right," Harry said, peering across at the door to the closet. "It doesn't look like they woke up."

"Dobby and Winky?" Ginny asked, kissing Harry on the cheek and taking a bar off the plate he was holding. "Been working them hard?"

"We all worked hard, but if they don't do more than their masters, they don't think they're working hard enough. I had to order them to go to bed."

The rest of the Pride had followed Ginny into the kitchen, and the bars on the table were being rapidly reduced in number. Harry brought over the plate he was holding, then returned for two more.

"How many did you make?" Hermione asked, picking up her third. "And where did you get everything you needed?"

"Well, there's a story behind that." Harry lounged in the big armchair, head against one armrest, legs over the other, Ginny curled up on the rest of the seat with a plate in one hand. "But you really have to want to hear it."

"Why wouldn't we?" Draco asked, pulling one of the plates closer to himself. "Quit hogging them, everyone, Luna didn't get any." He slid the plate down to her. "Have one. They're delicious."

"I'm not hungry, thanks," said Luna politely. "Harry, are you sure—"

"M ea'ng them, aren' I?" Harry mumbled.

"Of course." Luna looked at the plate again. "I think I will have one after all," she said, reaching out.

"Help yourself." Draco licked his fingers. "Still warm, even."

"I want to hear the story," said Neville, handing Meghan another bar before taking one for himself. "I know you're not allowed to go out shopping, or you would have come with us to Diagon Alley. Did Dobby or Winky go out for you? And why cornflake bars?"

"You don't like cornflake bars?"

"I like cornflake bars. I'm just wondering why you made cornflake bars and not cookies or biscuits or anything else."

Meghan looked suspiciously at Harry. "Did somebody try and throw strange things at you again while we were away?" she asked.

"No, but you're getting closer." Harry twisted his bar in his hands. "Do you want to hear it?"

"Quit teasing, mate, of course we do," Ron said impatiently.

"Please tell us, Harry," added Hermione.

"Well." Harry licked the extra marshmallow off one side of the bar. "It starts out with a bad thing. I found out today that Voldemort figured out how I was spying on everything."

"Oh, no," Hermione said, setting down her bar. "He knows you can travel astrally?"

"He knows, and he decided to find out if he could do it himself. And he could." Harry bit off a small piece of cornflake. "And then he decided he liked it so much, he wanted to make that permanent."

He wanted to run around forever like a ghost?" Ron asked. "But I thought you couldn't do anything physical while you're like that. You can't touch things or move them."

"You can't. I can't. But Voldemort figured out a way around that. Because of the Horcruxes, even if he kills his body, he isn't going to die." Harry grinned. "Or so he thought."

The Pride all snickered. "How many are we down to now?" Draco asked. "One? The snake?"

Harry shook his head. "The snake isn't one after all. We were wrong."

Meghan's eyes widened. "Does that mean we got them all?"

Harry bit into his bar and worried it up and down, baring his teeth around it in a Wolfish grin.

"Go on," Ginny said, a slow smile starting on her face. "So he thought he could be a permanent astral traveler..."

"He had it all planned out," Harry said. "He even pulled the magic out of a load of Death Eaters, just to make sure he'd have the energy he needed to be able to recreate a body."

"Recreate?" Neville asked. "You mean like transfiguring, or like conjuring?"

"Conjuring. He wanted to make it out of nothing. Like that." Harry snapped his fingers. "And he showed up here and did."

"Here?" Ron dropped his seventh cornflake bar. "He came here?"

"While we were gone?" Draco said over him.

"Did you fight him?"

"Did he hurt anyone?"

"What happened?"

"Hold on, hold on—" Harry put his fingers in his mouth, and the Pride quieted magically before he'd had time to whistle. "Huh," he said, taking them out again. "Have to tell Moony that worked like he said it would."

"What happened?" Meghan repeated emphatically. "Voldemort coming here is important! You should have told us right away, not made us ask!"

"Well, it was like this." Harry scooped a glob of marshmallow out of his bar with a free finger. "I was down here, thinking about making something to eat, when all of a sudden my scar hurt, worse than it ever has, even in the graveyard. And then I heard him in my head. He must have been able to get around the blood bond, since he technically wasn't alive anymore."

"What did he say?" Hermione asked, leaning forward.

Harry closed his front teeth around the marshmallow and pulled, creating gooey strings between finger and mouth. "He said, 'I am a god now, boy, and I will be your death. I will destroy you so thoroughly that no one will ever know you lived.'"

"Anyone else getting visual-audio disconnect here?" Draco remarked.

"Just wait for it." Harry licked the marshmallow off his finger and swallowed. "You have to understand, at this point, my brain had gone bye-bye. I was terrified beyond the capacity for rational thought. I kept trying to yell or fight him or something, but he was too strong for me. But then he sank himself. He said the one thing he could possibly have said that saved my arse."

"What?" Ginny demanded. "Tell us!"

"He said, 'Choose! Choose the form of the destructor!'" Harry looked innocent. "And I couldn't help it. It just popped in there."

The Pride looked at each other. Ginny picked up the cue. "*What* 'just popped in there', Harry?"

Harry stuck the cornflake bar in his mouth. "Uh ay-uh ah-eh-oh ah," he said around it.

"What?" said four people at once.

Harry scooted the bar to one side. "I *said*, the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man."

Three seconds of dead silence. Neville dropped his fourth bar back onto the plate.

"I think I'm going to throw up," said Hermione.

"I don't believe you," Meghan said, staring at Harry. "You never."

Harry swallowed and shrugged. "It was the first thing that came to mind. And while he was still trying to figure out what the hell he was..." He snapped his fingers again, lighting them on fire. "I might have overreacted a little."

Draco put his head down hard on the table. Ron turned green and pushed the plate of bars away.

"Oh, come on, it's just marshmallow," Harry said. "Four or five people tested it, and that was all they could say it was. Melted marshmallow." He looked around the kitchen. "All over everything."

"Is that why Dobby and Winky are asleep?" Luna asked. "Because they worked so hard cleaning it up?"

"We tried to help them," Harry said, raising his hands. "They wouldn't let us. I had to find something to do."

"So you made cornflake bars," said Neville.

"You have a better idea?"

Ginny picked up a bar, looked at it for a moment, then started laughing. "I've heard, if life gives you lemons, make lemonade," she got out between giggles, "but this is ridiculous!"

Her giggles spread to the rest of the Pride, and soon eight helpless teenagers were sprawled on tables and benches, gasping for breath.

"And I haven't even told you the best part yet," Harry said when he got his breath back. "He wasn't totally gone."

"No?" said Luna, munching on another of the cornflake bars. "These really are quite good, Harry."

"Thank you. And no. I'd blown up the marshmallow man, and everyone had come running, and then somebody screamed and pointed. We all looked..." Harry grinned. "Think of the wimpiest ghost you ever saw. Make him ten times wimpier. Then make him look really, really pissed off."

The description reignited laughter for a moment or two.

"And I walked up to him." Harry waved a hand around himself. "Remember, I'm still covered in marshmallow stuff. And I looked at him, and I said, "Tom, next time someone asks you if you're a god, you say..."

"NO!" shouted the Pride in unison.

High above, lost in the wind, a thin voice shrieked curses against the Muggle movie industry.