

Muggles at Bay?

By

DrT

Antonin Dolohov apparated into an old graveyard in the City of Norwich at 3:00 in the morning. He waited impatiently for the two raw recruits he had been assigned to show up. He was only happy with part of his mission; babysitting a pair of novices was not his idea of a fun evening, even if killing was. Finally, the pair appeared, one immediately stumbling over a low gravestone.

'Idiots,' the man thought. He knew that this was his last chance. He had been a young recruit in the late 1970s. He had spread terror better most of his contemporaries, and then the Dark Lord had temporarily been felled, and soon after that he, Dolohov, had been captured.

He had spent fourteen years in Azkaban. The fact that he had come out of the prison the least damaged of those long-imprisoned said something about his dark and dour personality. He had looked forward to going on the attack again, and had been very embarrassed by his failures at the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry. Most of the foul-ups of that night could be blamed on Bella, but somehow she had come out the least punished.

Dolohov had been recaptured. He had suffered weeks of imprisonment, albeit without having to deal with dementors, and was on the prowl again. His Master had freed him and the others captured, and had made it very clear to all of them, even Bella and Malfoy, that they were on thin ice.

Now he had another chance to please his Master and to regain some status. He had been assigned to finish off something he had started. He would kill Hermione Granger, mudblood advisor and friend of That-Boy-with-all-the-luck. His two recruits would then get to kill her parents, and thus win their chance at taking the Dark Mark once they turned seventeen.

"Take off your masks, idiots," Dolohov hissed. "Do you want some interfering Muggle calling their aurons?"

"Won't we just kill them?" Millicent Bulstrode asked.

"Not if we don't see them," Draco Malfoy replied. "They have some sort of signaling devices in their hovels."

"Oh," Millicent said. She seemed to think some more. "Won't we be disillusioned?"

Dolohov rolled his eyes. He loathed and feared the Muggle world. Still, he had studied it. He knew why the Muggle world was dangerous: it was large and Muggles were unpredictable.

"Yes," he said, "you will be disillusioned. However, the Grangers' house will be warded, and we'll have to take the disillusion off when we get close. That's when we could be spotted. Now, shut up and let me disillusion you. Try not to stumble or be left behind, and don't follow too close. And try not to get run over by a stray automobile." Bulstrode looked worried, but Draco merely sneered.

"Do you both have the wands you were given?"

"I still don't see why we couldn't use ours," Draco whined.

"I suppose you think you'll just get a notice for underage magic if you used it, after you use it to

kill?" Dolohov sneered.

"I've always used magic in the summers!" Draco protested.

"And you were at the Manor, where you couldn't easily be monitored. Are you that sheltered or are you that stupid?"

Draco stood as tall as he could. Before he could open his mouth, though, Dolohov said, "I've killed more, both wizards and Muggles, than your father ever will. If you foul this up tonight, you won't be going back alive. Understand?"

Draco made a face, but nodded. His father had warned him that Dolohov was to be respected.

Dolohov disillusioned the pair, and strode off, following the directions he had been given. It was three miles to the Granger house, which was in a near-suburban area of the town.

At this time of night, there was very little stirring. When the odd lorry rumbled by, he took his time to allow it to pass, lest either of his two followers get run over. He could almost hear them tremble when one large lorry rumbled close to them; he could certainly smell their fear.

This was an alien world to the pair, cosseted from birth within the small magical world. Malfoy had never been in a non-magical environment. He had never stepped into a Muggle village or peeked out of the Leaky Cauldron at Muggle London. He had always flooded to Platform 9 3/4. Bulstrode was little better.

"Can't you slow down?" Malfoy panted as Dolohov strode down a long pavement.

"Save your breath," Dolohov growled. "We have to get there well before 4:30, don't we?"

It was 4:05 when they finally reached the general area of the Granger home. "It's about six more blocks," Dolohov said. They stood in the shadows of an oak tree, and Dolohov canceled the disillusionment. Standard wards would extend at most a block in any direction. The Dark Lord had instructed them to cast no magic within six blocks until they were at the house and no serious spells until they had the Grangers.

Voldemort should have told them nine blocks. The canceling of the disillusionments were small spells, but they registered where six people could hear it. Three were the Grangers. The other three were in no immediate position to help, as there were already eight attacks in progress, and three more would start within ten minutes.

By the time the trio were within two blocks of the Grangers, Hermione and her parents were preparing, since they had not received any of the passwords the Order would have provided had this been Order members approaching.

Dan Granger flipped a switch on the upstairs landing, setting one set of sensitive alarms on and turning others off. His wife went on down the stairs to the entrance hall and stood behind a Victorian coat rack, where she could not be seen. Hermione stood, wand ready, in case someone tried to apparate behind her father, or, their worst fear, in case a dementor showed up.

Dolohov cast 'alohomora' and opened the side door. They were startled when they heard a steady 'beep-beep . . . beep-beep . . . beep-beep. . . .'

"Come on," Dolohov said. "Stun anything that moves!" He rushed up the four stairs to the ground floor, where he saw a flashing green light on a panel. He cast a silencing spell and hurried into the large entrance hall, and up the stairs, followed by Malfoy and then Bulstrode.

Dan Granger stood in shadows at the top of the stairs. He saw the man in a dark cape turn on the landing and head towards him, wand in hand. He heard others behind the man. He knew he had no choice.

"**BOOOOOM!**" roared the shotgun. The tight buckshot ripped into Dolohov's chest and lower face. Emma Granger had already stepped out from behind the coat rack and caught Bulstrode with the military TASER, supplied by Alastor Moody. Bulstrode gave a soft bleat and collapsed on top of Dolohov, who had been blasted on to Malfoy.

"Accio wands," Hermione said. Four wands flew to her hands.

"So, you decided to be expelled, hey, Granger?" Draco managed to sneer from the bottom of the pile.

"No. Are you ready to go to prison, Malfoy?" Hermione inquired in return.

"Me? I'm under the Imperius." Draco smirked.

"So, you're going to admit to being weak-minded? Well, at least that's believable."

"No one can stand up to the Dark Lord!"

"Harry has. Accio portkeys." Three large keys flew at Hermione, which she knocked down to the floor. Draco started to struggle to out from underneath the others. "Stupify."

Hermione levitated Millicent out of the way and bound her, and then scourged the blood away before moving Dolohov. As Hermione bound Malfoy, her father moved past her. "You might want to reload, Dad," Hermione warned.

"Right," he said. "Are you alright?" he asked his wife.

Emma nodded. "It's . . . it's a bit of a shock."

"It is," he agreed, reloading the first barrel of his shotgun. "I hope none of the neighbors heard."

"Professor Lupin said they wouldn't," Hermione reminded them. Seeing her parents' attention away from her, she carefully placed her heel over Malfoy's crotch, and then placed all her weight onto her left heel.

After another ten minutes dragged by, Dan Granger asked, "Shouldn't someone have responded by now?"

"If we were the only people attacked, yes," Hermione said, adding a fifteenth hex to Malfoy and Bulstrode.

"Should you be doing that, dear?" Emma asked with distaste. She was glad they had not turned the lights on. Even in the soft light of the street lamps, the pair were really rather disgusting and, well, runny, at that point.

Hermione shrugged. "No one can trace this wand." She straightened up as the keys disappeared and the wards chimed, showing they had caught the magic. Hermione stunned the pair again for good measure. "Voldemort will know they've failed. Someone might come to check on them."

"Right," Dan said. "Sweetheart?" Emma started moving towards the coat rack, when the ward chimes signaled three incoming persons, and the motion detector went off.

Then the wards signaled someone had given the password. Emma relaxed. Seeing the other two hadn't, she asked, "It's not safe?"

"It probably is," Hermione answered. "Everyone, stand back."

They heard movement on their front stoop, and then whispers. Only then came a knock at the front door.

Emma opened the door quickly, without showing herself to whomever was behind it. Hermione breathed a slight sigh of relief when she saw it was Fred, George, and Moody who came in, each with their hands held up slightly and with no wands showing.

"Thank goodness you're alright," George said.

"How did you know?" Hermione asked.

"I don't think they would be torturing you by casting boils and jelly-legs," Moody stated as Emma closed the door behind them.

"I'm Gred, he's Forge," Fred said.

Hermione nodded; that was an acceptable password. "Are you three alright?" she asked. After she had shut the door, Emma had turned on one light. Hermione could tell the new trio had been in a fight already.

"We are," Moody said. "There were twelve attacks. All on Muggle houses." He gave a soft cackle. "Eight of the houses were as well-prepared as you folks."

"We had to go to help some Second year Hufflepuff," Fred said. "They're hurt, but not badly."

"Finnigan was staying with Dean Thomas. They knocked out the Goyles, Senior and Junior, removed their hair, and tossed them into a Jamaican pub, saying they had been knocked out trying to molest Dean's little sister." George frowned. "Say, Hermione, what exactly does a 'skinhead' mean to a Muggle, anyway?"

"It's a type of white racist who hates black people," Hermione answered. "What happened to the Goyles?"

The two Weasleys looked at Moody. Moody gave his staccato laugh again. "Shacklebolt said he'd get around to rescuing them . . . eventually. Let's see, who else do you know . . . oh, yes, the Creevys. They had a bit more trouble with the three that went after their family, but I personally try to never argue with three London dockworkers."

"Huh?"

"The two boys stunned two of the attackers, but the third hit Dennis with the Cruciatius. Well, their father and two uncles went after Macnair with some sort of big grappling hooks. Macnair got one with a stunner, the other two hooked him like a fish."

The Grangers winced.

"Well, let's see what you got here."

"What about Harry?" Hermione asked.

"We don't know," Fred said.

George cuffed his brother on the back of the head. "We know there was some sort of attack, and we know he wasn't hurt, but we don't know the details."

"That's what I meant," Fred protested, rubbing the back of his head.

"Their portkeys disappeared right before you showed up," Hermione said.

"Then these two should stay here, just in case," Moody said. "Who are these two?"

"Draco Malfoy and Millicent Bulstrode, Slytherins, my year," Hermione said.

"Is that one Malfoy?" Fred asked.

"Yes," Hermione answered. The two Weasleys added another pair of hexes to Malfoy.

"Well, I'll take these three and their wands. You should also give me that spare, so when Malfoy or Bulstrode accuses you of anything, there won't be any evidence." Hermione handed it over. Moody smiled his very crooked smile. "You all did good."

"But will this make us greater targets, or less of one?" Dan Granger demanded.

"I can't honestly say," Moody said.

"Malfoy told me he would claim he was under the Imperius," Hermione said.

"He can say it, and the Ministry may even believe it, but if so, he still won't be able to bother you until September. We can keep 'em on ice 'til then, no matter what. By the way, there was a 5,000 Galleon reward on Dolohov, dead or alive. Do you have a Gringotts account, Missy?"

"Yes, sir, a small one," Hermione said.

"With your permission, I'll have the reward deposited there," Moody said to Dan Granger. He nodded his agreement. Moody gathered the three and activated a portkey.

"Dan, you go make some coffee. Hermione, bring your two friends over here. Let's see if we can repair this damage."

It was a few minutes after 7:00 in the morning when Bill Weasley showed up. He had also been awake most of the night and welcomed the coffee.

"What happened at Harry's?" Hermione asked. "Do you know?"

Bill nodded. "All twelve attacks were scheduled to start between 4:00 and 4:30. The only really successful attack from their point of view was on a Ravenclaw Third year. He and his family were killed. Nine of the attacks totally failed, and that was mostly due to the students and their Muggle parents."

"Did anyone ever rescue the Goyles?" Fred asked.

"They're alive, but are going to really suffer," Bill said with real satisfaction. "Shacklebolt somehow slipped them a trio of potions. One will keep them unconscious for a week, one keeps them mute, and the third somewhat suppresses their magic. They're in a Muggle hospital with multiple broken bones. I saw them this morning. They just got out of surgery, and are full of metal screws and are connected to some sort of metal framework." Bill shuddered. "They're going to have to heal the Muggle way now. They'll be out of circulation for months."

He turned to Hermione. "Madam Pomfrey managed to undo the hexes on Malfoy and Bulstrode. Somehow, Malfoy's testicles were crushed. They aren't repairable."

Fred and George howled with laughter.

"It's not funny!" Bill stated. Fred and George laughed all the more. "Alright, it was deserved, but remember, this means Draco can never have an heir. That means a great deal to people like him and his family."

"You were going to tell us about Harry," Hermione said.

Bill glared at his brothers, and gave up on them. "Voldemort attacked Harry's neighborhood with fifteen followers." That shut the twins up.

"Death Eaters brought neighbors to in front of the Dursleys'. Bellatrix Lestrange killed six of them. That's the point where we showed up, and fights broke out. The Headmaster dueled with Voldemort." Bill shook his head. "That was pretty amazing. We were slightly outnumbered, and I admit, I was getting worried. At that point, Harry got into the fight. He was on that Firebolt, and he just swooped out of the sky. He was like an avenging angel for about five minutes, when he got knocked off the broom. By then, the tide of battle was turned in our favor. Harry got up and dueled Lestrange."

Bill looked into some inner distance. "Harry wasn't angry as he fought, but he was playing with her. She tried to shoot the Cruciatus at him three times, and he managed to avoid them. He blocked everything else and then he really hexed her good before stunning her. Voldemort and two others,

Malfoy and Pettigrew, got away. We captured the rest."

Bill's shoulders slumped. "It wasn't a total success, obviously, since some innocent people got killed, but over all, we won." He looked at the Grangers. "You won, and by that, I mean the Muggles."

"That's good in the short term, I don't know about the long term," Hermione said.

"What do you mean, dear?" Emma asked.

"Pure Bloods are afraid of Muggles," Hermione said. "They're afraid the Muggle-born and those partially Muggle-raised will dilute and then overwhelm their culture. They're afraid of Muggle technology. They're afraid of the sheer number of Muggles. There are only about 20,000 people in the Magical world of Britain and Ireland, and less than half meet their definition of full-blood, that is magical for three generations and fully human for at least five. Probably less than a quarter would meet their definition of 'Pure Blood'."

"We do, and we're not like that," George said.

"No, you're not," Hermione agreed. "But you wouldn't want to live out in the Muggle world, would you?"

"No," George agreed, "we wouldn't."

"The magical world is changing," Bill agreed, "but the way to deal with it isn't with violence."

"I shot and killed someone last night," Dan said. "That was self-defense, but it was still violence. You did the same."

"I meant we can't frame the arguments with violence," Bill argued.

"I know what you meant. I just wanted to remind you, we aren't totally innocent now."

"True," Bill agreed. He sighed. "Hopefully, the Headmaster will put the proper. . . . What's the term for showing your side in the best light in the press?"

"Propaganda, or spin," Hermione said.

"Spin. That was the term I wanted."

"We'll leave all that alone, thank you," Emma said. "If you'll excuse us, we need to go to our surgery."

"Just two things," Bill said. "First, you are unlikely to be attacked by Death Eaters again. However, Voldemort still has the dementors. You won't have a defense against them. The higher-ups are still puzzling about what to do about them. The danger isn't over."

Everyone nodded their understanding.

"Secondly, Voldemort did achieve one thing. Harry's relatives have thrown him out. We think he needs some positive human contact. Could you put up with a grumpy sixteen year old boy for a few days?"

Emma and Dan exchanged looks. "Of course," Emma said.

"Just a few days?" Hermione asked.

"A few days here, a few days with the Lovegoods, a few days with Finnigan and Thomas, a few days with the Longbottoms, a few days at the shop with these two walking disasters in Diagon alley, a few days with some other people, and then some time at the Burrow. We don't want him to brood."

"Good thinking," Hermione said. She immediately started making plans on how to keep Harry entertained, and perhaps get some revising done.

After all, war or no war, there was school work to do before the term started.