Crossing Borders

by lize_steel

Summary

Newt expected to reunite with his friends (or more than friends) when returning to NYC. Instead, he has a dragon (maybe) running rampant through the slums of New York, and the only person Tina and Newt can rely on is a tight-lipped immigrant witch named Moira. Unfortunately, Moira's more afraid of the crime clan running her neighborhood than any dragon Newt can come up with. **Pretty much canon but with a bit of original stuff. PS: I started this right after the movie came out, so any canon updates since then are pretty much disregarded. *apologetic bow*

*I don't own anything from JK’s work. Everything else is my original content.*
Tina hadn’t gotten a letter from Newt in almost two months. She had, however, seen his book appearing in magic newspapers around the city.

*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.*

She was almost afraid of saying the title outloud, like it would corrupt the memory of the last time she’d said it. She brushed her hair back over her ear and smiled to herself.

Queenie groaned from their bedroom. “Yes, yes we know he brushed your hair over your ear. For goodness sake.”

Tina blushed as red as the roses Queenie had brought home. Aparently, another guy at work was after her attention again. Queenie came into the room at her thought and said,

“His name is Julius Mason. He seems very…well…”

Tina watched her sister’s face screw up with concentration as she tried to find something nice to say about him. Her eyes admitted defeat before Queenie said. “Dull. Like all the rest of them.”

*The rest that aren't Jacob,* Tina thought and winced. She met Queenie's eyes. A moment of quiet understanding passed between them.

“Well, it must be nice to have a ‘rest of them’,” Tina said lightly. One of the rose thorns caught on her thumb and she cursed, sucking on it.

“You don’t need a ‘rest of them’,” Queenie grinned. “You’ve already got one.”

“He hasn’t written for almost two months.”

“But you were just thinking that it might be because he’s traveling.” Queenie met Tina’s gaze and sighed. “And right now you’re thinking you’re deluding yourself.”

“You know, it was only a few days that I knew him,” Tina said lightly. “Not even a week, was it? That’s not long enough to know a person. To…you know…” God, she didn’t even know how to finish that thought.

“Tina, honey, he’s been writing to you for over a year. He must have *some* idea of a relationship in mind.”

Queenie's voice held infinite patience, hope, that Tina wished she could mirror. But for the past few weeks both had dwindled, and dwindled, and—

An owl landed on their perch and Tina rushed to the window, nearly tripping over a chair before yanking it open and grabbing the owl. The owl screeched in alarm.
“Careful, Tina!” Queenie called. Then, “It’s a package?!”

Tina’s hands sweat as she held it in her hands. She could feel the shape through the paper. She didn’t even have to look at the address to know it didn’t come from the U.S.

“Oh,” Queenie said faintly. Tina unwrapped the package in a daze. The gold title gleamed on the green cover. His name flashed up at her. Mocking her.

“Well, it’s not…” Queenie fought for words as Tina’s hands began to shake. “Oh, it’s not…Tina, dear, it’s okay, I mean it’s the first copy and…green! What a lovely shade…” But then Queenie stopped and just wrapped her arms around her sister and Tina dropped the book. It landed with a heavy thud.

Tina pressed her eyes shut. The world spun around her, too fast, passing her.

*He’s not here. He promised, but…did he?*

He hadn’t, really. But she’d seen the promise in his eyes, in his letters, in…

“That’s it,” Queenie murmured into her ear. “Hope. You never know what could happen with him. I mean, for all I know…”

“You’re right,” Tina rubbed her eyes and plastered on a smile. She forced her heartbeat to slow. “He probably got caught up in something. His book is going to be v-v-very,” she took a deep breath. “Popular, after all, so I’ve heard. He probably just ran out of time. To come. Yes.”

She reached down and picked up the book. Queenie’s arms floated away. Her feet shifted in her bright pink shoes.

“Anyway,” Tina said. “It’s probably…anyway. I should read it,” Her smile felt a little less forced now. “Some mention of our adventures might be in it.”

“True!” Queenie smiled. “That’s very true.”

Tina opened it and a flash caught her eye. She checked the inside cover. In scrawling silver ink, stark against the black, was a...

“He inscribed it?” Queenie squealed. “Read it out loud!”

“But it’s to *me*,” Tina said. “Besides, you could just read it in my—“

“It’s not the same!”

“Fine then,” Tina settled herself into the task, her voice brisk. “It says, ‘Dear Miss Tina Goldstein’—God, how formal—*I like to keep my promises. I said I would give this book to you in person, and so—”*

“I shall.”

Tina’s body stopped. Her heart, her voice, her breathing. Next to her, she felt Queenie’s inhale sharply.

Shuffling footsteps. Tina still couldn’t move.

“Erm,” his voice said. “The rest of it goes on about appreciating, uh, your patience, and I thought—“
“Newt?!”

Tina looked up and there he was, next to the table. He was just as tall and slightly hunched as she remembered. His wide, hazel eyes widened in a baffled, small smile.

“Hello, Miss Goldstein,” his voice was soft. “It’s very nice—“

Tina didn’t think. She wrapped him in a hug so fast that the book bumped against his head. He went rigid. Tina drew back almost instantly. Her heart was floating out of her mouth but somehow she spoke.

“Mr. Scamander! It’s so—it’s so good to see you! But also, “ she smacked his arm with his book. “How dare you play such a trick on me!”

Newt blinked. “I thought it would have been rather fun, actually, and Queenie assured me—“

“Queenie?!“

Tina spun on her sister who gave a sly grin.

“You’re not the only one who can write letters, sis. Besides, all your mopin’ was really depressing me,” Queenie softened. “And look at you now, smiling away.”

“Both of you,” Tina gestured back and forth between them. “Are way too good at this. It’s unsettling.”

But Tina also couldn’t stop smiling and she wanted to hug Newt again. Judging from his intense stiffening before, she settled for just grasping his shoulder. “But seriously, I’m glad to see you. Now sit, and tell me everything.”
Green Finger

Chapter Summary

So here Newt gets scared of fans, but the one fan he likes gets scared off.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

At the table, Newt sat still where Tina had placed him. Tina had vanished to change—apparently, she’d been wearing a house coat, not a dress, or something of that nature—and Newt was left alone with Queenie. He glanced around the apartment for a second, waiting for her to talk first. She just kept smiling at him. Finally, he got out,

“I thought that went well?”

“Oh yes, Mr. Scamander. Quite well,” she replied. Then she went over to the stove and started making tea before Newt could ask. “So, did our Tina get the first copy of your book?”

“Oh, yes she did,” Newt was blushing. “Actually, it’s set to come out today.”

“Really?” Queenie said. Newt wondered how she could sound surprised since she’d obviously already seen him think that. Queenie giggled.

“Anyway,” Newt said. “The cover of today’s—oh wait, there were advance ones I think, but even then, they will be different from Tina’s, more...ah...well, I chose Tina’s cover, actually, but the publisher thought it too plain—“

“Tina loves it, Mr. Scamander,” Queenie said. Newt didn’t know how to respond so he gave a tight smile before looking back down at his shoes. Some silence passed by. Newt’s feet shuffled back and forth under the table.

Honestly, he hadn’t thought this far ahead. He had pictured himself entering the apartment and seeing Tina, of course, but he hadn’t...well, the hug had been a surprise. Not unwelcome, given his current intentions...

“So, Newt,” Queenie smiled, pouring the tea for him. “What did you come back to New York for?”

Newt gave Queenie a sharp look at the same time Tina said from the other room, “He’s looking for a rare creature, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am,” Newt held Queenie’s gaze. “That is exactly why I’m here. About the Kyran.”

Queenie didn’t drop her smile but she nodded and moved away. Newt sighed. Tina came out, now wearing a loose green dress. It set off her lovely dark eyes.

Newt quickly looked down at his journal. Turning pages required a lot of focus.

Queenie giggled.
“So, is it for a follow up book?” Tina said. “The Kyran, I mean?”

“Maybe, if this one goes well,” Newt turned his journal around and said. “Here’s the creature we’re looking for.”

Tina drew closer. Her eyes widened. The sketch was of a huge, red…well, it had feathered wings, and a long neck, but the neck was covered in scales and it had a long, spiked tail. The thin beak reminded her of a dragon’s snout. The eyes were fierce and intelligent.

“It’s beautiful,” Tina said.

“Thank you. I thought it wasn’t a bad sketch myself. True, she wouldn’t stand still for more than a few seconds, but that’s Carmen for you.”

“Wait,” Tina waved her hand around. “You have one in captivity?”

“I have three, actually.”

“Then…why…”

“They’re going extinct,” Newt explained. “And they aren’t protected from it as is. I think they should be, so I’m studying them in order to convince people otherwise.”

“Where are you keeping them?”

“In the case,” Newt straightened. “Which is definitely not with me right now.”

“Newt,” Queenie and Tina said.

He sighed. “Okay, it’s here, but!” he said to their exasperated sighs. “It’s here in a very much secure new form. It’s not the same suitcase, necessarily, as the one President Picquery told me—“

“To never bring back to American shores,” Tina finished. Newt shrugged.

“Yes. But this time, nothing and no one is getting out.”

Just then, Pickett the Bowtruckle peeped out of his pocket. He squeaked at Tina and Queenie before vanishing again.

“Well, no one but him.” Newt said. The clock struck noon. Newt jumped out of his chair.

“Something wrong?” Tina asked.

It took Newt a moment to answer. “Yes, I mean no. I have a book signing.”

“Really? Already?” Tina said. “That’s exciting!”

“He’s terrified,” Queenie said.

Tina could’ve seen that without her mind reading. Newt was paling by the second and his eyes grew wider at the same time, staring at his shoes.

“I’d much rather stay here,” he said, almost stammering. “I don’t like—or people don’t like—I don’t always get on well with people, and now I have to do these things, and—”

“Hey,” Tina came closer then, softening her voice, “It’s going to be fine. Literally, there will be a
table between you and them, and everyone will be happy to see you.”

Newt’s lips twitched and his eyes lightened as they lifted to her’s. “What if I’m not who they want to see?”

“Yes, of course you are, you wrote the book!”

“Okay, but what if I’m not?” Newt stopped, then he smiled. “I guess it is that simple, right?”

Tina smiled back. This close she could count his freckles, feel the warmth radiating from him.

“So,” Queenie said. “Where’s the signing happening?”

“At a Muggle, I mean, No-Maj store. They’re putting up protective barriers and such.”

“What’s it called?”

Newt looked at the clock, then smiled again. “Why don’t I just show you?”

“Macy’s?” Tina and Queenie said. The brick front loomed over, the shining glass windows sparkling with gifts. People bustled in and out wearing everything from pin stripes to fur. Piano music floated out to their ears.

“I forgot how very American it is,” Newt said.

“Well, at least this time we aren’t chasing an Occamy or Dougal,” Tina joked. Newt swallowed.

“I’d much rather be here for that, honestly.”

Tina laughed. Newt saw it, took a deep breath, then started towards the front door. He was too aware of Tina’s footsteps right beside his and he tried to focus on the door looming before him, but then he could see all the people inside the store.

His breath was coming short again.

When they were less than a few steps inside, a woman in a smart suit stepped in front of them. Her name tag said, “Calliope Screy, magical literature.”

“Mr. Scamander?” she prompted. He simply nodded. Mrs. Screy gestured for him to follow. He weave through the daily shoppers, past storegirls with their flashing smiles, to what appeared to be a maintenance closet. Mrs. Screy didn’t glance back as she entered and they followed without a question.

Needless to say, inside was not a closet. The room almost reminded Newt of a ballroom, with soaring ceilings that danced with murals, and a floor decorated with a colorful mosaic that he wished he could see from one of the balconies above. The room, at the moment, was full of tables in rows like a study hall. But wizards were currently levitating them to the far sides of the room. In the center was one lonely table, surrounded by stacks and stacks of Newt's book.

Newt swallowed hard. Tina asked Mrs. Screy,

“Just how many are you expecting to come?”

“We never know,” Mrs. Screy glanced back and smiled at Newt. “But judging by the amount of
inquiries we’ve recieved, plus the early editions we sold, we’re hoping for thousands.”

Newt stumbled. In his pocket, Pickett squeaked in alarm.

“What was that?” Mrs. Screy asked.

“I sneezed,” Queenie said. Mrs. Screy narrowed her eyes but faced forward again. Newt’s heart was attempting to flee his ribcage, and the more he walked towards the table the further away he wanted to be.

Then, a warm hand pressed onto his elbow.

“It’ll be fine,” Tina said. “Really, Mr. Scamander, you’ve faced off with dragons and Occamies and nefarious wizards, but you can’t handle some eager fans?”

“Besides the last one, the other two didn’t scare me as much.”

“Worrying means suffering twice,” Queenie said. Her words hit him like a bucket of ice water but then the two sisters were shuffled away. Tina gave him one more reassuring smile. He held that image in his mind as he sank into his seat.

He could do this. He could.

After a few hours, though, Newt thought he was about to fall out of the chair. The line didn’t seem to have moved, though he’d signed what felt like hundreds of books. How did so many buy them already? Behind him, Mrs. Screy whispered,

“Only thirty more minutes, Mr. Scamander. The doors are already closed to the front. Oh, and I’ve been told to inform you that Miss Tina is waiting outside.”

Newt nodded to her just as another book was passed to him. He took it. The owner's hand caught his attention. Most of the hands he’d seen today were fair, clean, and sparkled with some jewelry. But this hand was pale and freckled, with nails hacked short and filthy. One finger was dyed green.

He followed up the arm to a teenager with a tall wiry build and bright red hair. She wore a heavy man’s coat over her grey dress, and her shoes had huge, tarnished buckles across the tops.

Her eyes seized onto him. They weren’t a discernible color, maybe grey, maybe brown.

“Hello,” he said. “I’m Newt Scamander.”

“I know,” she said, scowling deep. Mrs. Screy gasped. But Newt felt put at ease, weirdly, and smiled.

“And what’s your name? Who do I make it out to?”

“Oh, um,” she looked down. “Make it out to Peter, please. Peter Declan.” A beat, then, “Do you need me to spell it?”

"No, I think I'll manage."

The book he opened folded easily under his hand, like someone had opened it countless times. An advance copy, then. The title page was smudged with dirty fingerprints. It made him happy to see it.

“Does your brother like the book a lot?” Newt asked as he signed. When she didn’t respond, he said, “I was just asking because…well, the spine is well worn, I mean.”
“Not my brother,” she said. “And yes. He likes it a lot.”

He looked up at her again. She was tapping her foot, glancing from side to side. She almost looked ready to pounce on something. Or for someone to pounce on her.

“Nervous?” he asked.

“I have a question for you, mister.”

“Oh. Of course.”

“I remember readin’ that dragons live off of chicken blood and brandy. That true?”

He tilted his head. “When they’re young and in captivity, yes.”

“So you can keep them, then? Captive?”

“Yes, but it’s rather illegal,” Newt narrowed his eyes. “Why do you ask?”

The girl’s eyes instantly shuttered closed. “Just wonderin’, sir.”

Then she snatched the book and bobbed her head and moved towards the exit.

Newt’s hand floated middair a moment.

“‘The little girl didn’t even say thank you,” Mrs. Screy muttered. “Typical. They think we owe them the world.”

“Could you excuse me a moment?” Newt said, and then he was out of his chair and rushing after the girl. He heard the shouts of confusion and the familiar clicking of short, no nonsense heels following him.

“Mr. Scamander!” Tina called. “What are you doing?”

He’d already gone out the door and down a hall. He caught a flash of red hair heading out another door. He followed. Tina grabbed his arm. He just closed his hand over her’s and pulled her along. She made a surprised noise but didn’t resist.

Then, they were out in the alley. The girl had stopped, her hands on her knees, breathing hard. Newt halted out of her sight around the corner. Tina drew close next to him, leaning down and around his shoulder.

The girl straightened. Her expression turned thoughtful for a few moments as her fingers tapped the book’s cover. After she murmured a few words—not a spell he recognized—there was a flash of indigo. A creature appeared on her shoulder.

Tina and Newt gaped. The creature jumped off her shouldler and circled overhead, cooing down to her.

“I know, I know,” she said up to it. “I hate being with all those people too. But it has to be a dragon. Has to be. So why would Markus…” The girl shook her head and whistled. Newt watched in shock as her creature circled once more before landing on her shoulder. It even nuzzled under her chin, its curved beak brushing dangerously close to her neck.

Newt was moving before he could process it.
“Excuse me!” he called.

The girl spun on him. He saw her eyes widen a second before she sank into the ground--and vanished.

Tina and Newt ran forward to where she’d just stood. A single, shimmering feather lay on the spot. Newt picked it up. Tina circled the area, looking around.

"Did she Apparate?" Tina muttered. "But she sank into the ground. Didn't see a wand, either...maybe a Portkey? But she hadn't been holding anything but the...the..."

"Kyran," Newt finished. He turned the feather around in his fingers. "One of the last Kyrans on Earth."

Chapter End Notes

So...it's my first HP fic...and you met my OC! Hope you like her and Kai.
Letter to Both of Us

Chapter Summary

The obligatory letter from MACUSA—sorry, bit of a dull chapter BUT it gets better in the next one.

Tina had to hold in her questions until Newt finished signing. He added another thirty minutes for running out so rudely, but it wasn’t for another hour that he was able to leave completely. Newt kept relatively quiet on the Aperate back, and when they reached the apartment he just sank into a chair and stared into the fire. Tina assumed that meant he was staying for dinner.

“What happened?” Queenie asked. Tina filled her in. When she finished, her younger sister’s eyes were wide.

“So…he found the creature? Just like that?”

“It seems so.”

“So…why does he look so stressed?”

Tina lifted an eyebrow. You tell me.

“Well,” Queenie focused on him. Newt seemed unaware they were talking about him. “He’s wondering about the Kyran, definitely, but also…the girl asked him about a dragon! And—

“Okay okay!” Tina said too loudly. “I didn’t…sorry. I want to…I’ll ask him directly.”

She wanted to figure him out without any shortcuts, she meant.

“Well,” Queenie said. “You should ask him yourself, then.”

Queenie gave her a secret smile. Tina blushed and faced Newt. He had his fingers steepled together, tapping them against his lips. Tina decided to leave him to his thoughts. Even once dinner was set, he just murmured a compliment about the food before eating. Finally, after a few minutes of silence, Tina threw out,

“So that was the Kyran you were looking for, right?”

“Yes.”

Tina waited. Newt kept eating. Finally, she said,

“So what do you think?”

Newt stopped chewing a moment, giving her a blank look, before he shook his head and swallowed and said, “Right, sorry. Lost in my thoughts. So, as I said before, Kyrans are going extinct, and no one is protecting them because….well, quite a few reasons, the most important of which being that Kyrans can’t seem to be domesticated.”
“Like dragons,” Tina threw out.

Newt nodded. “My theory, however, is that Kyrans function more like the Phoenix. Highly intelligent, even dangerous if crossed, but in the end trainable and trustworthy in the hands of the right wizard.”

“And…she’s the right hands?” Queenie said. “You don’t seem sure about it.”

Newt shook his head. “Regardless of what I think, she seemed to have managed to…give him commands, that he followed.”

“How do you know it’s a he?” Tina asked.

“He’s blue,” Newt said, matter of fact. Then he continued, “But more importantly, if I can prove that he was domesticated, along with my other research, it should be enough to make them rescind their XXXX rating of them.”

“And that would make them a protected species,” Tina grinned now, seeing the light brightening in his eyes, “That would be huge, Mr. Scamander! Simply marvelous.”

“Yes, well, it all sounds very good,” Newt deflated. “But I have no idea where to find her, and it’s not like the answer is just going to fall out of the sky, so—“

Just then, an owl pecked on the window. They all straightened. Queenie finally went to retrieve it. Even after the owl left, she lingered by the window. Her fingers traced the letter a few times.

“Queenie?” Tina prompted.

Queenie turned. “It’s addressed to both of you.”

“Both of us?” Newt and Tina said at once. Then Tina said,

“They know he’s here? But he only just go here!”

Newt looked just as nervous as he took the letter. The familiar MACUSA seal winked up at him. His throat tightened. He opened it and began to read.

Queenie gasped. “From the president! Directly?”

"Is it about your suitcase?" Tina demanded. Newt shook his head.

"No. But I don't understand it, really."

Then he handed the note to Tina. She skimmed it. Her eyebrows lifted.

“There’s some strange things happening down in the fourth ward,” she read the paper closer. “You have excellent timing, Mr. Scamander.”

“What do you mean?” he asked, his voice too calm.

“People are disappearing. No Majs, mostly. But no bodies are showing up. Also, there’s reports of… of scorch marks, and a warehouse exploding, and with the missing persons…” Tina blinked. “Wow, there’s actually a lot of things going wrong. And they think it’s a… a…”

“Dragon,” Newt finished. He sighed. “They always think it’s a dragon.”
"This has been happening for weeks?" Queenie said, reading ahead in Tina’s mind. Tina nodded.

"That’s what I don’t understand," Newt said. "Wouldn’t someone have reported it to the police?"

The two exchanged a look. "Well, it’s a slum neighborhood…lots of immigrants there, you know."

Newt thought of the girl, then. She'd had an accent and those nervous eyes. It couldn’t be that easy, though. It couldn’t. He said,

“So they don’t go to the police?”

“Not if they can help it,” Queenie answered.

“Why?”

Queenie opened her mouth to respond but Tina plowed over it.

“It doesn’t really matter at this point, now the President is asking us to go to the neighborhood and find out what is causing the disappearances. Before the No Majs bring their police forces in.”

Queenie suddenly wrapped her arms around Tina. Newt blinked. Tina seemed just as surprised, still holding the letter in one hand and her coffee in the other so she couldn’t hug back.

“It’s going to be alright,” Queenie murmured, “You’ll be going in broad daylight, and no one in their right mind would try to harm you.”

“Is that important?” Newt said. “Where we are going?”

The two stared at him a moment.

“Only if you care about crime families,” Queenie said. “And, you know, murder.”

"Murder?"

“This neighborhood is under the control of a powerful clan right now,” Tina explained. “Their own mini mafia. The members get points for taking out outsiders, especially MACUSA agents.”

“That’s horrible!” Newt rose. “Then let's get the creature out of there while we can.”

The clock tolled then. All of them jumped in surprise. Newt hadn't even noticed the window had darkened outside.

"So, let's start...tomorrow, then?" Newt said. Tina nodded.

"I'll show you out to the door."

Queenie discreetly didn't follow. In the doorframe, Newt hesitated.

"I'm staying in a hotel right now," he said. "I mean, I thought about just staying in the case, but I figured it might not go very well this time around. Trying to be law abiding, and such."

Tina smiled. "I think it's a good idea. Where are you staying?"

Newt handed her a piece of paper. On it, he'd already scribbled the hotel's name, address, and a telephone number. Tina lifted her brow.

"You...had this ready?"
Newt blushed. "I just assumed--well, anyway, what time shall we meet tomorrow, then?"

"How about eight a.m.?"

"Sounds perfect."

There was an awkward pause as they regarded each other. Newt's eyes widened a fraction, and he leaned just an inch closer. Tina's breath caught.

Then Newt spun on his heel and practically sprinted away.

"See you tomorrow morning!" he called before he Apparated. Tina huffed and tried not to slam the door.

"You're right," Queenie said. "That is really frustrating."
On top of a tenement building in a rougher New York neighborhood sat a pigeon perch. Newspapers and fabric lined the outside, and one wall backed up against a chimney. The single window glowed a merry pink color.

This was Moira’s workshop. And inside, Moira turned a gold coin around and around in her hands. Her back was pressed to the chimney, the blanket thrown over her body, but she still shivered sometimes.

But it wasn’t half for the cold.

She knew the second she’d looked down that alley, it would go wrong. But she’d looked. Still, to give herself some credit, she hadn’t expected it to blow up.

The coin flashed, turning and turning in her hand.

She’d seen what the Falcons did to keep people in line. One time, she and Liam had been eating dinner when all the glass in their windows exploded. One piece had lodged in Liam’s side, and that was the first time Moira had used a mandrake reduction on someone she knew. After that, she and Liam had moved.

The next time, she’d been staying with Su, and a patronus had crashed the door down. It was a snake, she remembered, but it screamed like a human. Then of course Su took care of it before it got anywhere near her.

But raging fire? Busting street lights? That kind of power didn’t come from the Falcons. Too much damage. It felt too much like a Spirit Seal, but of course for that they would need a certain kind of dark magic...

Moira regarded the hundreds of herbs drying over her head, shivering. She hoped it wasn’t that at least. Kai clammered down and curled up beside her. His tail wrapped around her ankle.

“What do you think, Kai?” She looked down. “Who’s causing all this trouble?”

Kai blinked and chirped, then made a little rolling sound on his tongue before resting his head on her knee.

“Yeah, that’s what I think too.”

Suddenly, footsteps approaching the shack. She straightened. Kai’s head snapped up to attention. His tail tightened around her ankle and the feathers on his head stood straight up.

The footsteps were light, though, and it made her hesitate from pulling out her knives. Small, tattered leather shoes peeped through the door-flap.
“Hey, Moira?” The high voice shivered. “It’s Peter. Can I come in?”

Moira jumped up and opened the flap just long enough for Peter to steal inside. He instantly went to the chimney, pressing his little red hands against the warm stone. The wind was howling something fierce out there. When Peter wasn’t looking, Moira waved her hand over the doorway. A soft burst of magic covered it. Then the wind stopped seeping through.

By the time she turned, Peter was settled in his corner under her plant shelf. He folded his knobby knees to his chest and blew on his hands, shivering almost pathetically.

“S-sorry,” Peter said. “It was just really c-c-cold, and I th-thought..”

“It’s fine, Peter,” she said. She laid the blanket over his shoulders. He drew it closer around himself. Then he looked up at her with his eager dark eyes.

“You have the sad lines around you again.”

“Do I?” Moira sat across from him. Peter nodded.

“Was it the green boys?”

“No, they’re pretty okay.” For now.

“So what scares you?”

“I don’t know.” She smiled as Kai approached Peter’s feet and sniffed. Peter kept really still, like Moira had taught him, till Kai nuzzled his foot with his beak. Then Kai retreated and curled in Moira’s lap.

“Where’d he come from?” Peter asked.


Kai hummed. Peter asked,

“Where’s his family?”

“Dunno. He’s never told me.”

“Like me.”

Moira watched him close for a moment, but Peter’s eyes were clear. Unhurt. Kids were weird like that.

“That’s one way of looking at it, I guess,” Moira said. “What did you do today?”

Peter launched into his day with gusto that only a kid could manage, talking one second about playing his fife outside the shoemaker’s to chasing a gnarlynat—which Moira was pretty sure wasn’t real—to, finally, buying a pastry from a baker.

“He’s new?” Moira said.

“Yeah, and super nice. His last name is…is…well his first name is Jacob, so that’s all I know. Here,” he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small ball of napkin. He unwrapped it, revealing a pile of crumbs. He looked surprised. “Well, it was a part of a sweetie, and it looked like—like—it was like a rhinoceros—“
“Have you seen a rhinoceros?”

“Yes! They’re the ones with the horned noses.”

Moira nodded, impressed. Peter kept on.

“Well whatever, it looked like a rhinoceros with a balloon ’round its head.”

“That does sound…interesting.”

“Yes, and he gave it to me for half price.”

Now she stopped petting Kai. “Really?”

“Yes! He said if I came back again, right before the shop closed, he’d give me one for free.”

Moira felt a small twinge of suspicion. This was part of why she wished Peter would stay in one of the children’s houses. People didn’t just offer things for free without expecting some form of payment.

“Hey, Peter,” Moira said, “Would you mind taking me to the bakery next time you go?”

“You’d like to come with me?” His smile grew crafty. “You should buy somethin’ for me, you know, since I’m takin’ you all that way.”

“You drive a hard bargain, man, but I’ll take it. Just find me after I finish my rounds.” Moira was referring to her daily tonics and medicines delivery. They normally took her most of the early morning. Peter’s eyes widened.

“Can I come with you?”

“On my rounds?” When he nodded eagerly, she said, “Sure, if you like.”

Peter grinned. Moira decided then was a good time. She reached into her hidden drawer and grabbed the book. The book that might bring the Falcon gang down on her head if she wasn’t careful.

She turned. Her hands shook a bit. “Hey, I went to town the other day and got something for you.”

“Yeah?” Peter straightened up. His eyes sparkled.

“I know it’s a little late for you birthday, but…” She handed the book to him. He took it slowly. She saw the light die in his eyes, but said nothing at first. The kid was obviously trying to cover up his disappointment.

“This is…my old book,” he said. “Are you just going to read aloud again?”

“Open it.”

When he did, his eyes caught on the inscription. His mouth opened and shut while his fingers traced over the print. Moira couldn’t stop her smile.

Then he jumped up and shoved it back at her.

She almost stumbled.

“Peter, what’s—“
“What's it say?” He was hopping from foot to foot, “I can’t read the fancy script. What’s it say?”

Moira put her finger to the page and traced under the words. “To Mr. Peter Declan: I hope this book gives you hope for all the adventures to come. Though, judging by the fingerprints, it's been a few places already. Never stop exploring.” She paused, turning the words in her mouth. “Then his signature. Mr. Newt Scamander.”

“His signature?!” Peter snatched the book back then, staring at it. He sank onto hisbutt and kept staring.

Moira tried to read his expression. It was kind of blank, and his eyes looked like they were wet. Oh shit, was he crying?

“Peter?” she prompted. “Do you…I mean, do you like it?”

“It’s a nice thing, isn’t it?” He looked up. “What he said? It's nice.”

“Yeah, it is. ‘Course it is. What were you…”

Then, before she knew it, tears streamed down his face.

Moira had him in her arms in a second. He leaned into her. Then Kai came and huddled next to Peter, purring. Peter shook like a tree in a storm.

“M-m-mother said,” Peter whispered, “W-w-w-hen, I was older, she...she said I could read anythin’ and—I want—to show her—that I can r-r-r-read now, and…” He sobbed. Moira’s throat constricted, but she held him tighter as she rocked back and forth.

“She knows, Peter. I promise.”

“Your magic tell you that?”

“No. I just believe it.”

Peter blinked, then huddled down close to her again. He never cried for very long, and it wasn’t much longer after he finished that he curled up on her throw pillows and fell asleep. She tucked a blanket over him.

God, he was so small. When Kai clamored on top of him and curled up, his wings could wrap all the way around the boy’s body.

“Kai,” Moira whispered. “You can’t sleep on top of him.”

Kai opened one eye, regarded her, then curled tighter and fell asleep.

Moira smirked as she set up some pillows for herself. She considered adding another blanket, but her head was already pounding from the magic she used on her plants and the seals on the door. She carefully picked up Peter’s book and set it back in the drawer next to her own mother’s books.

As she did, the coin flashed at her, falcon side up. As she watched, the engraved falcon stretched its wings and flew up and out of the coin. In another blink, it flew in claws first, like it was hunting. Then it was still again.

The Falcons knew she had left the burrow, then, without permission. If she left the coin outside the Hideout, that meant she wouldn't be harmed. But it also meant...
She'd think of it later. She had a few days at least. For now, her little lean to on a rooftop was warm. Peter snored a little, and Kai whistled a bit, then the city rumbled and scraped by behind that. Moira closed her eyes and slept.
What Other People Do

Chapter Summary

Just a short Newt being cute chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Newt woke up to an unfamiliar ceiling. His shoulder ached from the thin mattress and he rolled it out as he sat up. The room was more of a cell then anything, with a narrow wraught iron bed and washstand. He could hear one of his neighbors snoring through the wall.

Still, he didn’t care, because at the foot of his bed was his whole universe. After washing his face and pulling on his work clothes, he opened the case and descended inside.

As soon as he walked in, the sounds and sights and smells of his creatures enveloped him. Any stress vanished from his bones. His steps grew lighter even as he carried heavy pails of water, pellets, food, and any of his creatures that wanted to catch a ride on his shoulders, which turned out to be Dougal, Pickett, and a few of his Bowtruckle friends.

But this was his favorite part, or one of them anyway, of his creatures. How happy they were to see him. Regardless of anything. Not many people reacted that way to him. Then again, humans were the most cruel and fickle creatures sometimes.

Tina’s face flashed before his eyes. He almost tripped on one of the feeding pails. Pickett squeaked in protest.

“Sorry,” Newt said. “Sorry, Pickett, I didn’t mean to startle you.”

Pickett waved his little arms and shook his head. Newt wanted to shake his head at himself. Tina was far too often a thought in his mind, and he didn’t know…what he was supposed to do with that. Or he did. Or he knew what other people did. But what other people did didn’t normally work for him. And he’d learned to not resent that.

Till now.

He distracted himself feeding every one else until, finally, he ended up back in his small shack. His Kyran sketches lay there. The outline of the Kyran was there, but he’d been on a quest for the precise shade of blue that would capture the brilliant feather on his desk. He’d resigned himself to conjuring some oils.

Working on that took the better portion of the next hour. When it was done, though, he kept sketching another face. This one had a sharp nose, soft hair and intelligent eyes and a smiling mouth and—

Newt quickly put the book down. Tina smiled back at him from the page. The sketch could never do her justice, though, not to him. It couldn’t capture her laugh, or that particular sparkle her eyes had when she was correcting him, or the feel of her pressed close when she hugged him…
“You’re in deep, Scamander,” he murmured. Pickett made a sound in his pocket. Agreement, probably.

The small photograph behind him burned a hole through his back. And Queenie’s words.

You need a giver, Newt.

Was Tina a giver? Did that make Newt a taker? He ran his hands over his face. He didn’t know. All he did know was that he wanted to see her today. And he could go from there.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone! Sorry it’s a short one and it’s not actually as exciting as I made it out to be (shame on me) but I had to break up this one and the next one and the one after that... anyway, thanks for reading!
As Newt took care of his creatures, Tina leaned back against the counter in her kitchen and studied the morning reports. The report's content was worth the owl waking them up at dawn. It read:

*This explosion makes it the third in this ward in the past month…No-Maj hysteria reaching a dangerous point…suspect is most likely from a gang in the area…one witness (possible suspect) below from eye-witness accounts.*

Under that was a sketch. Rough as it was, she made out that the girl was probably about eighteen or so, with an almost skeletal, scowling face and a huge cloud of hair around her head. A thin line pointed to her face and said “bone pale, lots of freckles”. Another line went to her hair and said, “fire”. The line to her eyes said “uncertain.”

Tina sank further back against the counter. She couldn’t be absolutely sure, but it looked like the girl from yesterday. If it was, what was she doing at the explosions?

“It’s a bit of a brain twister, huh?”

Tina looked up and smiled. “Morning, Queenie. Coffee’s almost done.”

Queenie came into the kitchen. She wore a fluffy pink robe over her silk nightgown. Her hair was still rather messy.

“I know, I know,” Queenie shrugged. “But it’s Saturday. I shouldn’t have to do my hair yet.”

Tina laughed before relocating to the kitchen table. She spread the rest of the files in front of her. Maps, accounts, recommendations…

“If I remember right,” Queenie said, heating water, “Mr. Scamander’s coming over today?”

“I invited him,” Tina flipped a page. “Since the MACUSA requested his presence.”

“Oh huh.”

Tina stopped flipping and looked up. “What?”

“He was very happy to see you too, you know.” Queenie sipped from her mug. “Very happy. And yesterday, when he was dragging you through the building, it was like watching another adventure flick!”

“I told you, Queenie. What Mr. Scamander thinks is his private business.”

“Oh? So you don’t want to know what he thought when he saw you taking off your hat the other
day?"

Now Tina stopped. She told herself to be strong. She wanted to find out on her own. She didn’t want Queenie to tell her…right?

Queenie quirked an eyebrow. “He thought, ‘her hair looks softer then I remember.’”

“Oh.” Tina couldn’t help deflating a bit. Queenie sighed.

“I thought it was sweet! You do realize at least eighty percent of his thoughts are about his creatures? To have even a bit of sound time is really—“

“Its okay, Queenie,” Tina shrugged. “After all, it’s been a while since we’ve seen each other, and—“

“Yes yes, we know,” Queenie shook her head. But then, she smirked. “Though, I see what you wish Newt had been thinking.”

"Queenie."

"I mean, I didn't know you had that in you, Tina! Is it bad that I'm proud?"

"Queenie!"

Queenie almost skipped away. Tina blushed again and went back to her paperwork. At least the papers weren’t curious about her love life.

Someone had already marked up the reports a bit. X’s on the map marked where the strange explosions or occurrences had happened. Besides being in the same burrow, she couldn’t find another pattern. Under the X’s, or around them, were names of sources of information. Snitches, really. It always made her a bit uncomfortable how easily people would rat on each other.

"Tina!" Queenie hissed. Tina snapped up. "He's going to be here in an hour!"

"What?" Then Tina realized she was still wearing a robe and her hair was unsightly. She looked over the maps one more time before going to get dressed.

So when someone knocked on the door, Tina was fully dressed for the day. And it was a good thing too, because Newt Scamander stood in the hall, and if Tina had answered the door in anything but a full outfit he probably would have fainted a bit.

Instead, he grinned, his head a little turned to the side as he asked the doorframe (less than Tina really) if it was alright for him to come in. Tina grinned and waved him forward. He entered. His suitcase dangled from his left hand and he turned as soon as he was inside.

“Sorry if I’m early,” he said. "I tried to take the train, but then I got confused so I just Apparated.”

“Not at all! It’s nice to see you, Mr. Scamander.”

Newt nodded and looked at his shoes. His hands were fidgeting on the suitcase handle.

Tina’s eyes widened. *Wait, he brought that—*

“Hi, Mr. Scamander!"

Newt spun. “Oh, Queenie. I didn’t know—I mean, it’s good to see you.”
“It’s okay,” Queenie swished her weight from side to side, “I can’t hear exactly what you’re thinking right now. That accent, you know. And don’t worry, I am off to the store now!”

This was news to Tina, but Queenie already had her hat and bag and was in the door frame when she tossed a smile over her shoulder.

“Have fun, you two.”

The door closed. Tina was frozen, not sure if she was going red from irritation or embarrassment. Tina dared to look over at Newt. He was as red as roses but simply nodded to himself and approached the table.

“These are,” he cleared his throat. “These are more reports, right?”

“Yes!” Tina seized, again, on the paperwork. She came up behind him. His long fingers traced over the sketch of the girl’s face.

“That’s her,” he said. “The one with the green finger.”

“Green finger?” Tina said. “You mean like a green thumb?”

“It was her index finger, actually. I’ve seen it before, in fact, with a medicine man in the Ukraine.”

“So the girl has some knowledge of Ukrainian medicines,” Tina scratched her forehead. “I guess, we could use that. Somehow.”

“Use it?” Newt looked up. “What do you mean?”

“Well, uh, if you were up to it,” Tina shifted her weight. “I figured we could go to the scene, the surrounding area, and find her. She’s a key eyewitness for me, and she’s the owner of the creature you’re looking for. Two birds,” she couldn’t read Newt’s expression. It looked like it was going to be a smile but stopped halfway. “What do you think?”

“I think…that’s a brilliant idea, actually, not that I’m surprised since you’re…” Newt looked down at his suitcase. “Yes, brilliant. I’ll just take care of this.”

“Yes, speaking of that, did you think…” but Tina trailed off because before her eyes his suitcase was shrinking. When it was the size of a No-Maj dime, he clipped it to a chain—like a pocketwatch—and tucked it into his coat.

“Oh,” Tina said. Newt gave a shy smile.

“So then, let’s go catch those two birds.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay I PROMISE the next chapter will have them running around the city and a familiar baker MAY OR MAY NOT appear. See you next time :) Thanks for reading!
Partners in the Field

Chapter Summary

Tina and Newt go on a suspect hunt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“What are we doing?” Newt asked. Tina peered around the corner.

“We’re following a suspect.”

“I fail to see how this will help me catch a dragon,” Newt glanced behind him, forward. “I’d be better off in my case. She doesn’t even have the Kyran with her.”

“We already checked out the explosion site.” And found it crawling with No-Maj’s in a panic. Roped off my ass. She’d had to call in more Aurors to take care of it, and it turned into an even greater fuss. Frankly, spotting the red head heading into the nearby tenements had been a blessing.

Tina faced Newt. “What, you don’t wanna spend time with me?”

“What? No!” Newt burst out. Then he shook his head, “I mean, no as in that’s not right, not no as in…I’m fine spending time with you, I even enjoy—“

“She’s back!”

Indeed, the young woman had come out of the tenements without the package. She paused outside, putting something into one of her jacket pockets.

“We move in?” Newt said eagerly.

“Not yet,” Tina said. A small boy hopped out the apartment door behind the young woman. He was fair and thin, with thick dark hair and ears that stuck out from his head. He fell into step beside the suspect.

“Who is that?” Newt asked.

“Not sure.” The report hadn’t said anything about him. “C’mon.”

They followed the young woman as she wound her way through the entire burrow. The knapsack she held kept producing small packages and bags—using charms, no doubt—and normally when she came out of the building she made a small note in a half-bound journal. The little boy appeared to just follow her, sometimes carrying a package, talking non stop. He never stopped smiling. The young woman smiled back sometimes.

“She seems nice,” Newt said, his voice soft. He and Tina were pretending to look over a newspaper. Tina tracked the girl from the corner of her eyes.

“Maybe she is. But I want to know what’s in those packages.”
"Couldn't we just ask her?"

Suddenly, the young woman turned, and Tina lunged back into an alley. She grabbed Newt and pulled him back with her.

The space was narrow. They faced each other and almost shared breath. Newt’s eyes were glowing, his breathing fast, and he grinned down at her. Tina’s heart skipped. She almost thought he was going to kiss her.

“What happened?” Newt said, shaking her thoughts. Before she could respond, voices approached their spot. Newt's eyes widened and he quieted.

“…and then, the Gnarlygnat flew at me,” a boy’s voice said. “And I had to duck! Because they have these really long legs, you know? And if they hit you, then you…you…”

“What do you do, Peter?” a female voice replied, and the two walked by the alley entrance. In the small flash, Tina saw the young woman peering down at the boy, and the boy had his hands up in the air, gesturing, as he said, “You die!”

“Just like that?” she replied, smiling.

“Just like that, yeah.”

They moved out of sight and hearing. Tina leaned out of the alley in time to see them heading down into the subway.

“They’re leaving the burrow,” Tina said back to Newt. Newt was scribbling in his notebook, though. Tina sighed.

“What are you doing, Mr. Scamander?”

“The boy said he spotted a Gnarlygnat,” Newt said, almost to himself, “I’ve never heard of them living this far north of the Equator…”

Tina merely grabbed his arm again and hauled him towards the stairs. However, half way down, she stopped.

“Tina?”

“Do you have a hat?” Tina asked.

When Newt stared at her in confusion, Tina said, “She’ll recognize you without a crowd around. Plus your hair is…”

“Obnoxious?”

“Distinctive.”

Newt humored her and conjured a heavy dark hat. He tucked his hair up into it, then pulled the brim low over his face.

“How’s that?” he asked.

Tina gave him a sharp once over. Actually, he looked pretty cute in a hat. She liked seeing his hazel eyes peer at her from under the brim.
Not that she had time to dwell on that. She pulled her own hat lower over her face and they descended the stairs.

“I feel like I’m in a crime novel,” Newt whispered into her ear. “Like a regular Sherlock Holmes.”

“I’m Sherlock, you’re Watson,” Tina whispered back. Newt laughed to himself.

The platform held only the girl and Peter. Tina was glad for their own hats. The young woman didn’t look over, though. Her eyes seemed to be flickering around and around the station. Like she was expecting something to fall out the ceiling on her.

Peter was rattling away.

“I think I’m going to try something new this time, definitely, but I want a rhinote—rhinoceros cookie, definitely, and maybe try one of those pastries…”

“At least,” the young woman murmured. Then, her head snapped straight ahead. Her whole body went rigid. Her eyes seized on something like a deer spotting a wolf.

“Moira?” Peter said.

In one movement, Moira stepped forward while moving Peter behind her. Her lips started moving silently.

“Moira, your sad lines are back,” Peter’s voice shook. “Who do you see? What’s there?”

Moira didn’t respond. As Tina watched, transfixed, a rosy haze of magic appeared around Moira, and around Peter. Peter shrank closer to her.

“What is she seeing?” Newt said aloud.

Moira lifted her right hand and wound back like she was about to slap something—and then the train barreled into the station.

Tina jumped. Newt placed a steadying hand on her elbow. His grip was warm and strong.

“Th-thank you,” Tina said. She was internally kicking herself for being such a ninny.

Newt stared ahead. “It’s no trouble. But she’s getting on the train now.”

“Right. Keep your head down.”

As the crowd thronged out of the train, Tina and Newt stole forward. Newt kept close to her in the horde. Tina didn’t mind. When she looked back, Newt looked ready to bolt from having so many people around him. She gave him a reassuring smile.

They ended up in the car behind Moira’s. Tina could spot her red hair through the small glass window on the door. Moira hadn’t looked back once. Tina wished she could see the girl’s expression, see if she was still unsettled.

Newt settled in beside Tina. His long legs, folded up, left this knees brushing the chair in front of them. It didn’t seem to bother him at all.

“I wonder what she saw,” Newt said.

“There was nothing there,” Tina said. Newt thought a moment, then tilted his head over, like he was
telling Tina a secret.

“Did you know, that I think many of the creatures we know of don’t see the same way we do?”

Tina held his look, intrigued. Newt nodded. “I think it’s quite possible some creatures see much, much more than we do. Like how Dougal can see the most possible future, and I have a theory that some creatures may perceive heat visually.”

“That’s…incredible to think about.” And Tina wanted to laugh that Newt was comparing Moira to an unknown species. “But how could we tell if that’s true? It’s not like the creatures can tell us.”

“But they do,” Newt played with a frayed thread on his cuff. “We just don’t know how to listen yet, is all.”

Tina smiled. “That’s a lovely thought.”

“I thought so,” His cheeks darkened and he shifted his feet on the ground. “Anyway, sorry if I’m not exactly the best person to have on a…suspect hunt.”

“You’re doing pretty swell to me,” Tina nudged his arm with her shoulder. “Put me in the field and tell me to track an animal, and I’d be tripping over both my feet.”

“No, you’d learn fast,” Newt said.

“Oh really?”

“Y-yes, I think so.”

They entered a tunnel and the train went dark. Temporarily blinded, Tina wasn’t prepared for the curve that jostled them. Newt’s arm banged into her’s.

“Sorry,” he said. “I wasn’t expecting—“

They rounded another curve and now Tina found herself squished between the train wall and Newt. He was incredibly warm, and the leather smell was sharper today. Then the lights came on. Tina’s eyes locked up with Newt’s. His lips parted in surprise. He had really nice, full lips, and he was pressing her against the wall.

Newt shifted back almost instantly, looking away from her. Tina brushed her hair back behind her ear. Newt said nothing, not looking at her, his foot bouncing against the floor. An absurd urge to laugh washed over Tina and as she bit it down embarrassment replaced it. What was that, then?

Thankfully, Tina saw Moira’s head lift. A welcome distraction. The train came to a stop, and Moira rose.

“Let’s go,” Tina said. Newt followed her off the train. The station was a fresh one, the cement still smooth and unmarked.

“Have you been here before?” Newt asked as the crowds circled around them. And suddenly, all Tina could see was hats and hairstyles.

“Shoot,” Tina leaned around, “I lost her. Can you see her?”

Newt’s head turned from side to side like a confused bird, then his eyes latched. “There! She’s heading up the stairs to the East exit.”
Tina followed his gaze and saw Moira climbing the stairs. The young boy’s hand was locked in her’s. He chattered away in obvious excitement.

“C’mon,” Tina said. She started pushing through the crowd, making a few men tossed some ugly looks her way. Then she heard Newt mutter something and the crowd parted around them.

Tina lifted an eyebrow back at him. Newt’s smile was a bit crafty but he shrugged.

They reached the above and looked around. Traffic rushed up and down the sidewalk. Storefronts gleamed with Christmas windows that had children stopping and pointing inside. Women bustled by with shopping bags. Business men rushed across the street, holding their hats against the winter wind.

“Do you see her?” Tina asked.

“No,” Newt sounded put out. “I don’t, sorry.”

“It’s not your fault,” Tina said. She ran a hand over her hair and dislodged a few hairpins. Why here? Why get off here?

Then, a soft tap at her elbow.

“What is it?” Tina asked Newt. Newt had an odd, almost scared look on his face. Tina’s heart seized. “Newt? Is something wrong?”

He pointed. Tina followed it, and caught her breath. She recognized the wide, bright windows, the curling pink script.

It was Jacob’s bakery.

And the suspect was holding the door open for the boy to wander in.

Chapter End Notes

guess who's back...back again...Jacob's back...tell a friend...
“Oh,” Tina said, feeling a bit faint. “Okay.”

Newt made a small, gasping noise. She turned. He was paler than death and he almost stumbled. His eyes were glued to the shop window.

“Mr. Scamander,” Tina said, but Newt didn’t seem to hear. Not knowing what else to do, Tina grabbed his face and yanked him down to her level. “Newt! Look at me. Okay? Just at me.”

Newt’s eyes drifted to her’s. The pain there made her breath catch. Still, she kept her voice level. “It’s going to be fine, okay? You don’t have to go in if you don’t want to. There’s a bench just outside, and you can wait there.”

Newt still hadn’t said anything, just watching her with eyes saying far too much. People bustled by, parting around them like an island. Then, slowly, one of Newt’s hands came up to cover her’s. Relief coursed through Tina.

“Here, let’s go sit a moment, okay?” Tina released his face but took his hand, guiding him to the sidewalk and out of the crowd’s way.

But instead of going to the bench, Newt’s grip tightened and Tina found herself being pulled towards the bakery.

“Newt?” she said.

He didn’t look back, like the small motion might deter him from entering, but then Tina actually started pulling back on his hand.

“Newt, listen, if we go in—” A woman bumped into her. Tina recovered, “If we go in, she’ll see us!”

“No, she won’t,” Newt said flatly and Tina felt a slight shiver, like a breeze passing around her—a charm, or spell, or something. Newt reached the door and pushed his way inside.

The door almost slammed back into the window, making everyone in the store stop and look over. Tina could imagine how red Newt’s face would be. More importantly, Moira was looking at them. Tina’s heart fell into her shoes as she met the girl’s wide eyes. A thousand excuses, explanations ran...
through Tina’s mind.

And then Moira looked away.

Tina didn’t know if it was safe to breathe yet. But Moira wasn’t showing any recognition of them, any sign of panic. Either she was really good at hiding her feelings, or…

Tina exhaled. “What did you do, Mr. Scamander?”

Newt didn’t reply. He was staring straight ahead at the counter, where Jacob was ringing someone in. A smile lit Jacob’s round, home-spun face, and when his eyes lifted that smile widened.

“Hello, Miss Goldstein,” he greeted warmly. “Haven’t seen you in a few days. How’s your sister?”

“She’s doin’ swell, thanks for asking,” Tina said. Newt had gone statue-still next to her. When Jacob’s eyes flickered with confusion, Tina squeezed Newt’s hand and said, “This is my friend, all the way from England, a Mr—“

“Oh!” Understanding lit Jacob’s eyes. “I know him.”

“You do?” Newt said eagerly, coming forward. Caught in his death grip, Tina moved forward with him. Jacob nodded as he wiped his hands on his apron.

“Sure, the other Miss Goldstein mentioned you yesterday. Said you were some big deal writer?”

“Oh,” Newt said faintly. Tina couldn’t bear to watch the hopeful light fade from his eyes.

“I mean,” Jacob’s smile tightened. “She was right, wasn’t she?”

“Yes! Yes of course,” Tina stepped in front of Newt. “Please excuse him, he just journeyed over the ocean, y’know, and he’s a bit…uh, seasick still.”

Jacob looked relieved.

“Oh, yeah that would be a helluva of a trip. I’ve never met someone from that far away. Was it nice there?”

“In it’s own way, I suppose,” Newt said.

Jacob smiled easily. “Just like anywhere, I guess. Oh, Miss Goldstein,” his tone shifted. “My assistant Roger actually had something he wanted to show you in the back. Do you mind…?”

“No! Not at all. N—Mr. Scamander,” Tina said to Newt. “Keep an eye on…things, while I’m gone?”

Newt nodded. “Oh yes. I’ll do that.”

Jacob moved to the swinging door that led to the back of the shop, but Tina lingered by Newt’s side.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

Newt’s eyes wouldn’t meet her’s and his lips were tight.

“It was hard the first time I saw him too,” Tina said. She reached up, almost patted his cheek, but settled for his shoulder. “But I’ll be right back, okay? And then we can leave.”
“Okay.”

Tina bit her lip. “Thank you, though, for coming with me.”

“Oh, of course,” Newt looked down on her. “I wouldn’t imagine coming in here without you.”

Tina’s breath caught.

The door swung open and Jacob peered out. “Miss Goldstein?”

“That’s my cue, I guess,” Tina bobbed her head and left.

Newt turned and drifted by the counter, keeping his head down and out of the way of the others. Peering through the glass, though, he couldn’t help but smile. All the creatures from their adventures looked back at him. Customers pointed and marveled. Newt wondered if Jacob remembered the friend that told him about all the creatures, or if he just thought the creatures came from dreams. Either way, Newt felt a bit better.

Moira and Peter still peered through the cases. Figuring the charm he cast was still strong, Newt drifted closer to them.

“See?” Peter was saying, “I told you, Moira. A rhino—rhinoceros, but with a balloon ‘round it’s neck.”

Moira stared in surprise. “I thought you’d made it up, Peter.”

“Nope,” the boy sounded proud. “And look at the one next to it! Mr. Jacob calls it…ah…some squirrely word. I remember it, though, from the book…”

_A demiguise_, New thought. Jacob’s rendering even held a small candy. Newt had to look away.

Something else caught his attention. Next to him were two older ladies. One wore a thick grape-purple overcoat lined with fur. The other wore a shade of pink lipstick too bright for her thin mouth. Both regarded the two kids with something like disgust.

“Can’t imagine what _their_ kind is doing this far up town,” the lipstick woman said. “You’d at least think they’d try to dress nicer. You think their mother let them out that way?”

“She might be doing the mothering for that little one,” the other woman said. “You know how they breed young down there.”

“They can’t help it. They’ve got those apetites.”

Newt was blushing just listening to them, and he felt something almost like rage steal over him. The shop was small, and though the women were mumuring, he saw a dash of embarrassment in the flush on Moira’s cheeks. Her eyes flashed with anger. Only Peter seemed unaware. His small fingers smudged the case as he chattered away. And when he looked up at Moira, she’d tucked any trace of anger away.

_Well_, Newt thought. _There’s something noble there, I guess._

The door to the back swung open and Jacob’s voice carried through. He had a tray of fresh pastries in his arms and the shop hand followed behind him with another. Tina came last. She had a spot of flour in her hair. Her hurried eyes instantly sought Newt. Something like relief flashed in her expression. As she strode over to him, Newt fought the urge to grab her hand again.
She looked up at him. “How’re you doing?”

“Better,” Newt said. And it was true. Now that Tina was beside him, he felt a little stronger. Better. Enough that when Jacob smiled at him, Newt managed a small smile back.

“So, what’s England like?” Jacob asked.

“Smaller then you’d think,” Newt said. “And raining.”

“Excuse me,” a voice said from behind him. Newt tensed up and Tina had to pull him away as Moira and the Peter came up behind him. Tina’s expression of shock was almost comical when the two paid absolutely no attention to them.

Right. Newt hadn’t really explained the charm he’d used, how it would prevent the two from recognizing them. He’d been too busy panicking. He was still panicking. He’d thought he was fine, fine with the whole lot, but now he was panicking…

Jacob smiled down on Peter. “Hello, Mr. Declan. Who’s your pretty friend?”

Moira flushed but her eyes were sharp as she sized up Jacob. Peter grinned.

“This is my friend Moira. She’s a neighbor.”

“Ah, that friend,” Jacob stuck out his hand. “Peter told me a bit about you the other day. Said you make a hell of a doctor.”

After a second, Moira shook his hand. “I do, mister.”

“And Irish too,” Jacob released her and grinned. “Must have been a long train ride up here. And the weather’s brutal out.”

“A bit,” Moira said. Then she looked down on Peter. “Peter, which pastries would you like?”

“How many are you payin’ for?”

Moira’s eyes sparkled. “Only two. We’re not Rockefellers.”

Peter faced Jacob and told him his order. Jacob went to fetch it. Suddenly, Peter turned and looked up at Newt.

“Excuse me?” Peter asked.

Newt froze. He stared straight ahead. Peter made a small noise and pulled on Newt's sleeve.

“Mister, are you deaf?” Peter raised his voice. “Mister, are you—“

“Peter,” Moira hissed. “Don’t talk that way to strangers.”

“But I have a question for him!”

Tina coughed. Newt glanced over and her eyes floated obviously down to Peter and nodded.

Well, there was no avoiding it then. Newt steeled his resolve to stay calm, then looked down on Peter. Peter’s expressions was serious.

“You said a word,” Peter said. “When I was pointin’ at the squirrely cookie.”
“I did?” Newt had no memory of it. The boy nodded.

“What was it?”

“The word?”

“Yessir.”

“It was…um…Demiguise.”

Peter’s eyes lit up. “That was the squirrely word! I didn’t know how to say it.”

“Oh, well—“

“Have you ever seen one?”

Newt was saved from answering by Jacob bringing the order. He was ringing it up on the register when Moira reached into her coat. She pulled out a well-worn change purse, but at the same time something else clattered onto the counter.

Newt started. It was a gold coin. Not any currency he recognized—it had some bird etched onto it—but maybe it was American. It flashed coldly on the scratched counter.

“Oh wow,” Jacob stared at the coin. Moira froze. The smile vanished from Peter’s face. Newt couldn’t read Peter’s expression, something like fear and disgust mixing together.

“Is that real gold?” Jacob pointed. “Wow, I’ve never seen…I mean, it was just eight dollars all together…”

Newt felt all the eyes in the shop turn on the counter. Whispers hovered. Newt heard thieves and pure gold tossed around with unsettling suspicion. Peter huddled close to Moira like he’d done in the train station.

Then, Moira put a huge smile across her face and picked up the coin.

“What was it?” she said, her voice louder. “Eight dollars, sir?”

Jacob nodded. Moira pressed the coin between her two palms, rotated her hands, slid them apart—and seperated her hands, so he saw there was no coin at all. Jacob’s shock shifted to amusement. The panic in the room drew back as well, changing to something like excitement. Newt was impressed. Moira had evaluated the situation and adapted, just like that.

Moira reached out and behind Jacob’s ear, and pulled out one dollar. Jacob lifted an eyebrow, stifling his smile.

“I believe you need eight of those, miss.”

“Oh I know,” Moira said. She scrunched her nose in mock thought. “Now, where did I put that money…” She looked down at her hands again as she pressed the dollar bill between her palms, then separated her hands, rolled both her wrists. When her palms opened there were four crisp bills in each.

“Ta da,” she said. Jacob burst into applause, as did half the shop. Peter was hopping from foot to foot. Not sure if he should clap, or just look surprised, Newt glanced back at Tina. Her face was tense.
“Hey there!” Jacob said. “We got ourselves a regular Houdini in my shop!” There was another round of clapping and Moira turned as red as the cherry tarts. Jacob handed over the bag. “And hey, if you ever want to do some magic like that again, feel free to come back anytime.”

Peter snickered. Moira just bobbed her head, took the bag, and hurried towards the door. Peter waved till he was out of view.

“Kids today,” Jacob said. “Way more talented then I was. Oh, Miss Goldstein, I was going to ask you...Tina?”

Newt shook himself from his daze and looked over at Tina. Tina was still staring at the place Moira had been.

“Blatant code violation,” she said to herself.

“Miss Goldstein?” Jacob said, uncertain. Newt bumped Tina. Tina shook herself and looked up.

“Yes, Mr. Kowalski?”

“I was just wonderin’ if your sister’s offer for dinner next Wednesday still stands.”

“Oh, yes! It most certainly does. I know she'll be incredibly happy to see you.”

“Good then,” Jacob sounded relieved. “Good. Well, here’s your pastries. I hope you enjoy them all with your friend, oh and give my best to your sister, huh?”

“Will do,” Tina smiled and took the bag. She and Newt were almost at the door when Newt found himself spinning and saying,

“It was nice meeting...meeting you, Jacob.”

“It was nice to meet you too,” Jacob replied, sounding a bit surprised but pleased all the same. Newt ducked his head and dashed out of the shop. Tina had to speed walk to keep up with him. She bumped into a few people along the way.

“Mr. Scamander?” Tina said. Newt headed down into the subway. Tina grabbed his coat. “Hey, are you okay?”

Newt shook his head and headed straight for the train. Tina climbed on behind him. The car was empty, and as soon as Newt sat he put his head in his hands. Tina sat next to him and her hands floated for a second, unsure how to comfort him.

“What going on?” Tina asked softly. “Newt...”

“He was...my friend,” Newt said. His shoulders began to shake, and his voice cracked to a whisper. “I don’t have...many friends...and I knew he wouldn't remember me but he really doesn't...he doesn’t know me.”

Hesitation wouldn’t help now. Tina wrapped a hand around his arm and leaned onto his shoulder. He let her stay there, holding him without crowding him, until his shoulders stopped shaking. By then the train was speeding along. He murmured Tergeo to clear his tears. Then he sat straight up, staring ahead.

She waited.

“I’m sorry,” he said, not looking at her. “I get emotional easily.”
“It’s fine.”

“It embarrasses people. My father never knew what to do about it.”

“I think it’s fine, Newt.” She blinked. “Mr. Scamander. Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” his eyes drifted down to her’s. “If you call me by my first name. You did it before, remember? And in your letters you do.”

Her breath stalled. She swallowed. “It’s a bit improper, though, don’t you think?”

“Not between friends, no.”

“We’re friends?” Tina squeaked. Newt shrugged and looked out the window. She could see the hurt in his eyes in the reflection though. Had she said something wrong? He could have misread her, thinking that she didn’t think of them as friends, but of course she did. She’d thought they were more actually, or wanted to be more, or…

They sat in silence until they reached Moira’s stop.

Chapter End Notes

Updates might be a bit shelter-skelter as the snow keeps messing with our power.
*cries* *but also builds a snowman*
**Rooftop Watch**

Chapter Summary

Moira's following the followers.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Moira peered over the edge of the rooftop where the two wizards walked below. Kai perched on her shoulder, not leaving her side since she’d returned from her journey to the bakery. His weight shifted back and forth as he tracked the birds up above her.

Moira wished she could watch the birds instead of the two Goldbloods on her tail. She’d noticed them once she left Peter at the apothecary and it'd taken forever to give them the slip. Now, they were walking towards the place everyone called Scorch Alley. Different, of course, from Scorch Block, or Scorch House. Only idiots wandered into them.

Idiots, or Goldbloods.

Moira stepped over the crack between two buildings, coasting easily from one rooftop to the next. Kai’s claws gripped tighter. But she was still looking at the two wizards. She noted their details. Nice coats. Freshly pressed faces. The witch was consulting some papers, her dark hair tucked under a neat hat. The wizard had reddish, messy hair and was tall yet a bit stooped, like he was bracing himself for a punch. Something about his demeanor struck her as familiar.

Then, it hit her. Of course. That hair. Scamander, Newt Scamander.

Then who was the witch? She looked kind of familiar. A friend? A fellow creature thief?

That last thought gave Moira a flash of guilt as she remembered how Newt had smiled up at her at the signing. How happy he'd made Peter without even knowing who Peter was. Then Moira's brows drew together. She felt strange, like there was a memory or a thought that she was supposed to be thinking right then, but couldn't quite draw it out. Something about Newt and Peter...she shook her head. The present was more engaging.

Like right now, the witch was looking at Scamander and tucking her hair behind her ear, her lips tight. When he made to look up at her, she instantly looked away.

Moira stepped over another rooftop, watching. Now Scamander was watching the witch, talking maybe to himself, and when the witch looked over, he looked away.

*Well,* Moira thought. *That looks awkward.*

More pressing issues out weighed their drama, though. Like what the hell they were going to Scorch Alley for.

Moira lifted her hands and pressed her palms against her ears. Very clearly, she thought, *amplify.* A pleasant heat washed over her ears. She lowered her hands and leaned down over the side. Scamander was talking. Even with the charm, he was hard to make out.
“… these burn markings are distinctive to… but it’s far outside its native land…how could it have…transportation alone…dangerous all the same…”

Then, the witch’s voice, easier to hear because she spoke a lot louder. “But is there anything you can tell that would tie it to the explosion yesterday? Was it a dragon?”

Moira stopped breathing. The charm faded off so she could only hear her own racing thoughts. 

_They knew. He knew._ Moira’s heart rate accelerated. And then Moira saw an alley way exploding, felt the heat scorch across her skin, and falcons rose from the flames, and she heard Kai scream and then the other screaming voices that no one else heard because everyone else was running, running, and _no Moira I’ve got this let me go I…_ 

Moira missed the next roof crossing.

For a breathless second, her foot fell between the two buildings. Bricks, wind, the ground, it all rushed at her. She didn’t even have time to scream.

Then Kai screeched, his claws tightening on her collar as he flapped his wings, the sheer power of them pushing her onto the next rooftop. There, Moira lay on her back, staring at the sky and breathing fast.

Shit. That was close. Shit.

Kai hopped onto her chest and squawked into her face. The crown of feathers on his head stood up like a lion’s mane.

“I’m fine,” Moira murmured. She felt like she’d might vomit, and she was sweating, and she couldn’t tell if it was from the visions she’d seen or from the fall but--Kai screeched this time, then butted his head against her forehead. Moira laughed weakly.

“Don’t be such a worry wart.”

Then she realized how loud Kai had been. She sat up and went to the roof edge. Kai clung to her coat lapels now, hanging off her front, so she was forced to wrap her arms around him or he’d fall off. She took a deep breath, peered down…

The wizards were gone.

Moira had time to curse before she was no longer alone on the roof.

Chapter End Notes

Confrontation ahoy! All the exciting things coming up, maybe answering...who are the Falcons? What’s wrong with Scorch Alley? And when are Newt and Tina going to be on the same page?! 
Stay tuned :) 
p.s.: love the comments thank you!
The two wizards stared at her. Or, Scamander looked at Kai. Neither moved to help her up.

Moira pushed herself up. “How did you get up here?”

Kai hummed against her body, a question. She stroked under his chin, almost unconsciously, to calm him. Mr. Scamander tracked the movement. A slight smile lifted his lips, warmed his eyes. And suddenly, she saw that same expression in another location. You said a squirrely word...demiguise... And that same awkward smile. In the bakery, this morning, when Peter had asked that stranger, that guy, a question...

“You were following me,” Moira said, half accusation, half shock. “This morning, to the bakery.”

“Yes,” Scamander said. He almost smiled. “That’s really impressive, actually, that you saw through that charm.”

“I’m not an idiot.”

“I wouldn’t even suggest that. Anyway, my name is Newt Scamander, as you know. This is my—”

“Why did you follow me to the bakery?”

“Tina Goldstein,” the other witch finished Scamander’s statement. Moira didn’t have to see her badge to pin her as Auror.

If this day could get any bloody worse...

“Are you here to arrest me?” Moira demanded. She had her knives on her. She could run.

“No,” Scamander said. The witch, Tina, made a protesting noise. Newt pointed at Kai. “That’s a beautiful Kyran you have there. Could you tell me how you got him?”

Kai hummed again and wrapped his claws tighter through the familiar holes in her coat lapel.
“I didn’t steal him,” Moira said. “If that’s what you mean. But you want to take him away, don’t you?”

Scamander didn’t deny it. That’s when Tina moved forward and drew a wand. She kept it by her side, but at the sight of it any thoughts ran out of Moira’s head. Her heart sped up. Sweat broke out under her arms.

“Look,” Tina said. “Me and Mr. Scamander here have had a very long day, and we just want this to be simple, and easy, okay? And I bet you want the same thing.”

Moira’s eyes darted between the wand and their faces. Scamander had a wand too probably. Moira’s knives were useless, then, and she was panicking too much to focus on their auras, to read if they were being sincere or not. “You should put your wand away.”

“Why?” Tina demanded.

Moira’s eyes darted around. “Can you just put it away?”

“No.”

Kai hissed. Moira looked down on him. His jade green eyes met her’s, confused, but trusting. Still his claws stayed secure, anchoring himself to her. And it was like she found an anchor herself. Her heart cooled. Her breath steadied. She looked up.

“I won’t give you Kai. And if you're smart, you'll get your wand waving selves out of this neighborhood.”

Moira turned and jumped off the roof. She heard the witch scream behind her, but Moira focused on the roof across. She hit it rolling. Kai let go of her coat to fly over her, letting her run full pace. The icy wind kicked at her face. Her boots thumped far too loudly as she sprinted.

She heard them Apparate. She didn’t look back. Then she heard a spell fire off. Moira spun, almost running backwards, and deflected the spell with her bare hands. The witch stared in shock, her wand still raised, but then Moira lept onto the next roof. See if they could follow her now—

And then she crashed into something. Moira spun at the impact and fell onto her butt. She twisted instantly. Froze.

In front of her were five guys. They wore dirty workman's clothes and heavy boots. Steel toes. Over their faces were green, grinning masks. Their hands were tucked into their pockets, but she knew the skin would be covered in magical tattoos. Trade Marks. Tattoos that let them stun, kill, and torture accurately.

She would run into a fleet of Falcons as she fled Aurors. Of course she would.

“Hullo, Moira,” the one in the center said cheerfully. “We were just looking for you.”

Kai landed on her shoulder and hissed, his feathers peeked. Moira stood up. When she crossed her arms, she felt the two knives in her coat press to her chest. It grounded her.

“What do you want?” she demanded.

“That’s rather unfriendly,” the leader said. “Why don’t we stop by the Wretching Cat and have nice chat? Grab a drink and talk business.”
“Why don’t you take off those masks and we can have a chat right now?”

“Company policy, sweetheart. And if you don’t get nicer, we’ll execute some other policy on you.”

The guys behind him laughed. Moira paled.

Just then, the air in front of her rippled, and the two wizards appeared right between her and the Falcons. Tina glared at Moira.

“Look, if you keep running, we’ll have no choice but to arrest you and bring you in to MACUSA.”

“Tina,” Scamander said in warning, already spotting the men behind them. She straightened and spun.

“Bugger,” Tina said. “Now who are you all?”

The leader’s easy manner dropped. “You brought Aurors here?”

“I didn’t do anythin’!” Moira snapped back. “They followed me!”

But she was sweating, and stepping back.

“You don’t move, Moira,” the leader said. The guys behind him drew their hands from their pockets. Their Trade Marks swirled over their hands like smoke.

“We’ll take care of the Goldbloods first,” the leader said, lifting his hands. Magic collected in his palms. "Then, we'll deal with--"

A few things happened very quickly. Both wizards drew their wands. Kai rose into the air with a great burst of speed and flew at the Falcons. Someone yelled. Kai’s claws raked across the leader’s neck and the leader reeled and screamed and blood spurted.

“Kai!” Moira screamed. But the creature spun up, unharmed. Then Moira understood. She flung herself towards the roof edge and lunged across. Her feet didn’t make it but her hands found purchase in the edge. Her body slammed painfully on the side. Behind her, she heard spells cracking and snapping. People yelled in the apartments below. Pointing, whispering, watching. No one dared venture outside.

Moira finally pulled herself up and onto the rooftop. She scrambled behind the chimney to catch her breath, and found herself just staring up at the sky.

She was free. She was fine.

Kai landed next to her. He peered around the chimney and chirped.

“They’ll be fine,” Moira said. “They have wands, after all.”

But she gave in to curiosity and looked across. The Goldbloods were still standing. The Falcons lay around them like sacks of potatoes. She was impressed despite herself. The witch was waving her hands around, obviously complaining or frustrated about the confrontation. But Scamander looked up, and met Moira’s eyes. She held his gaze.

Kai ducked his head and smiled. It was an almost gallant gesture. Then he turned around and gave no sign of having seen her.

Kai hummed.
“Don’t like him,” Moira muttered. “They’ll turn us in the second they get.”

Chapter End Notes

The next couple chapters will have some Newt and Tina alooooooone time :) Stay tuned and thanks for reading! Also feedback appreciated :D
Victoria

Chapter Summary

Tina meets Victoria, and Newt and Tina finally do that thing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’ve never seen someone deflect magic with their bare hands before!” Tina exclaimed as soon as her apartment door was closed.

“I’ve seen it,” Newt said. “But only a few times.”

“Really? Where?”

“At Hogwarts. A professor could do it.”

Tina watched Newt closer, noting how his voice had hitched a bit. It was the same hesitation he had in his letters when she’d asked about Hogwarts.

“What was his name?” Tina asked.

“Dumbledore. Professor Dumbledore.”

“Hmm.” She remembered that name, of course. The professor that tried to keep him from being expelled from Hogwarts. That was a story that she wanted to hear from Newt, one day. But right now he wasn’t looking at her, staring out the window with a sad, distant look, and Tina decided not to press. The questions in her head were more pressing anyway.

“But that girl was hardly twenty. How could she have mastered such advanced magic? Or those other...men?”

Newt shrugged. “I couldn’t say. I’ve never seen it before in any of my travels.”

Tina rubbed her hand across her forehead and sank into a chair. After a moment, Newt sat down next to her, but as soon as he did she was up and pacing again. Newt looked a bit amused.

“And who were those men?” Tina said to herself. “In masks like some sort of theater troupe.”

“I couldn’t say,” Newt said.

“And all those markings on their hands? What were they?”

“I’m not sure.”

“And what did they want with her? There was some bad blood there.”

“I don’t know.”

Tina huffed and punched the mantle. “I hate not knowing.”
“I’m sorry,” Newt was genuinely flustered. “I wish I could be more help.”

“Hmm,” Tina said to the fire.

Newt watched her a moment. Then, he reached into his pocket and pulled out the shrunken case. He waved his wand and the case expanded again. At the sound, Tina turned.

“Newt, are you serious?” Tina asked. “I still can’t believe you actually brought it with you.”

He was already half in the case when he looked up and gave his lopsided grin. “Would you like to join me?”

Tina kept her expression stern. For about three seconds. Then she grinned and followed him down the ladder. At the bottom, he offered a hand to help her off the ladder. She didn’t need it but took it anyway. Holding it, she remembered when they were fleeing the bowels of MACUSA, dodging Aurors from every corner. She’d been surprised by how rough his hands were, how warm they were...

He let go as soon as she was settled on the ground.

“I thought you might want to see them,” Newt said.

“See what?”

Newt just gave her another, almost secretive, smile and gestured for her to follow. They wandered past a few habitats, till they reached one that reminded her of the pictures she’d seen of the African savannah. She looked around. The Erumpet munched away in the distance. Otherwise she didn’t see...but then, on the horizon, were three little dots. As they drew closer, they started to take on color, shape. Tina started back as they flew over her head, so fast her hair shifted, and then they circled overhead.

“Kyrans,” Newt said.

Tina couldn’t stop watching them. The smallest was a soft emerald shade, the other the brilliant ruby she recognized from his drawing, and the last a glimmering onyx. Even in the warm light of the case the scales on their long, graceful necks were almost prismatic. Their elegant wings hardly moved as they floated above.

“They’re so beautiful,” Tina whispered.

“It’s their downfall, unfortunately,” Newt said. His eyes took on the warm, loving glow that she recognized even before he started explaining. “There are so few left because of their vivid shades. Add to that habitat loss and game hunting, and it’s not looking too well...These three were the last ones I found in Northern Africa, last time I was there. There’s rumors of another population in southeast Asia, but I never encountered them on my travels,” His eyes darkened. “These three might be the last, for all I know.”

Tina thought of the sapphire Kyran, its jade green eyes, and realized how beautiful it would look with its kind. Then Tina thought of Moira. Her narrow, mean eyes. Her pale, starving frame. And that demanding tone that had no respect for either of them.

A street rat. Did she even know the treasure she possessed?

Newt had ventured over to a small container behind one of the trees. Reaching in, he pulled out a thick leather glove and a small burlap sack. He continued explaining as he worked. “But they’re
beautiful aren’t they? And smart. So smart. There’s legends about the ancient Egyptians using them as judges in trials. Kyrans have an excellent sense of human nature, and human guilt. The Kyran was rather attached to her,” he said, as if reading her thoughts earlier, “So that must mean there’s some good in her.”

“You think they judge that well?”

“Yes, I do. Did you see how the Kyran attacked the leader, allowing for her to make a get away?” When Tina didn’t respond, he nodded. “That ability to judge and attack was prized for centuries, before people decided they weren’t worth it anymore.”

Newt held the food in an upturned palm. The black Kyran floated down and landed gracefully on his arm, then extended its neck to eat out of his palm. Newt smiled, free and un-selfconscious. It warmed Tina’s heart.

Carefully, she approached. “Can I…feed one?”

Newt turned his head a little, not disturbing the creature. His eyes sparkled. “You want to?”

“Yes! I mean, it won’t hurt or anything?”

“No, not at all! The talons take some getting used to. Here,” He gently nudged the Kyran onto a nearby branch (the Kyran flew away after that) then retrieved another thick glove for Tina. The leather felt cool against her skin and made her fingers unwieldy. Newt had to pour the feed in to her palm. It smelled like cloves.

“And then,” Newt moved closer, lifting her arm up by a gentle hand on her elbow. “You just wait for one to come to you.”

The Kyrans spun overhead. For a few breathless seconds, Tina just waited and stared. Their talons looked long and sharp. Their beaks didn’t look any friendlier. How did that Moira girl let the Kyran nuzzle her with that thing? Still, Newt’s presence warmed her, and Tina swallowed her fear.

The black one, again, circled lower, then with a great swoop of its wings, landed on her arm. It was far lighter than she was expecting. The great tail curled around her arm. It was scaled like the neck, but with large spikes folded down into the scales. She took a sharp breath.

“Easy goes it,” Newt said into her ear, “There’s nothing to fear.”

“What if she judges my character harshly?” Tina saw the image of the blue Kyran slashing at the leader’s throat.

But Newt just said, with utmost certainty, “She won’t.”

The creature met Tina’s eyes. This close, Tina could see the gold flecks in the deep velvet blue eyes that reminded her of a wolf. It felt like ages she held that gaze. Then, the Kyran blinked, and began to eat from her palm. Tina grinned with triumph.

“That’s better,” Newt said. He still didn't move his hand from her arm. Was he standing closer to her? Tina cleared her throat.

“Does she have a name?” Tina asked.

“I was thinking Victoria.”
“Like the queen? How very British of you.”

“Well, she is the leader. But I just like how it sounds like victory. Victoria.”

“I like that.”

Newt laughed and she felt the breath patterned against her ear. It sent a shiver down her spine.

As if she sensed it, Victoria looked at Tina with an expectant look. Then Victoria shook her head and flew in to the air. She cried to the other Kyrans.

“What'd I do wrong?” Tina said. She was blushing, and disappointed, dammit.

“I don’t—I don’t think anything, but I'm not sure,” Newt said. “I’m thinking, perhaps—“

Suddenly, Victoria dove straight down. Her talons flashed in the light and her beak parted in an horrid screech. Gone was the gentle beauty, and as Tina met those too human eyes—

Tina’s back smacked the ground. Breath temporarily gone, Tina could only stare up as Newt lifted himself up on his arms, his body shielding her, his bright hazel eyes focused only on her.

“Are you alright?” Newt's voice almost shook, “Are you injured? Hurting anywhere? I’m so sorry, I don’t know what Victoria was thinking…”

Tina still couldn’t breathe, but for an entirely different reason. Newt was much heavier than she expected, and much…firmer, against her. The forearms on either side of her flexed with muscle.

“No, I’m okay,” Tina choked out.

“Are you sure?” He held her gaze. “Perhaps Victoria saw something behind you, or something shiny caught her attention, or she thought…thought your hair was a small animal?”

Tina sputtered and shoved herself up. Newt instantly backed off of her.

“What did you call my hair?” Tina said. She rose and brushed herself off. Newt jumped up as well.

“Sorry,” he said. "That did not come out well, what I meant was—“

Victoria made another swoop at her. This time, her talons weren’t extended, but Tina still ducked—and found her nose pressed against Newt’s chest, his one arm around her back, while his other pointed to Victoria.

“Victoria,” he said, his voice firm. “You need to please stop that. It's rude.”

Victoria made some sort of cawing noise, and Newt responded with something, but Tina wasn't really listening. Newt's scent wrapped around her like a blanket. It was sweeter than she expected. Something like cloves, and soap, and the earthy smell that was just Newt. The last time he’d held her like this, he’d just saved her life. She shivered at the memory. But when she breathed deeply, his scent flooded her senses, and it only made her stomach tremble.

He looked down and she flushed.

“Are you okay?” he asked softly. “I’m sorry, I’ve never seen her act this way before.”

“I’m good,” Tina turned her head and met Victoria’s gaze. She swore Victoria smirked. “She looks pleased with herself.”
“Yes, she does.” Newt laughed a bit. Tina laughed as well and looked up at him, about to say something, but when his eyes met her’s the words sort of vanished from her head. He was still holding her. The thin line of air between them tensed, seemed almost obtrusive.

The humor faded from his eyes. Her heart pounded through her ears.

“I’m glad I was with you today,” he murmured.

“Mmmhmm.” Tina couldn’t think of words, really. She just looked at his mouth.

“Tina?”

She forced herself to look up at him. He drew her closer, and she was suddenly aware of all of her pressed to him, and the heat tensing between their bodies, and how strong his arms were, and… Tina just went for it. She leaned up and into him—and his lips met her’s halfway.

Tina had imagined kissing Newt. She’d expected the warmth, hesitation, softness. But she hadn’t predicted how her whole body would light up inside, little tremors and sensations skimming down every part they touched. It was intoxicating. She wrapped her arms around his neck to take in more when he drew back.

“Tina?” he said, soft and barely breathing. So uncertain, yet so incredibly adorable. She smiled up at him.

“Newt?”

“I—I think I might faint,” Newt murmured. He laid his forehead against her own and they began to sway, gently, back and forth. “Just give me a second.”

“That’s fine,” Tina whispered. And it was. Carefully, his arms wrapped around her waist. He was trembling. She was too. They breathed together, against each other, for a few warm and comfortable seconds. Then Newt’s hand closed around her chin. Her eyes met his. A thrill flowed through her body as he licked his lips, as she saw the innocent hunger in his eyes, and he leaned down—

“I KNEW IT!”

Queenie’s voice shattered them. Newt practically threw Tina away from him. Then he turned, giving her his back. Tina was very confused, till she saw how his hands were slightly in front of his…oh.

She spun on Queenie, who was grinning in the shack doorway. Seeing Tina’s murderous expression, though, she instantly high tailed it back into the shed.

Tina considered following. Considered a few less-than-lady-like words she’d throw at Queenie.

“Tina?” Newt said.

Tina turned with a smile in place. But Newt wasn’t looking at her, rubbing the back of his neck with his back still to her. The glow in her chest shriveled.

“Newt?” Tina said.

“Nothing. It’s nothing. I’m going to…work on something. Excuse me.”

And then he strode off, leaving Tina suddenly feeling very small and alone, surrounded by creatures. Her face flushed. She stomped back into the shed, up the ladder. Queenie waited above for her. Her smile faded.
“Oh,” Queenie said. "I really…oh.”

“Did you need something, Queenie?” Tina asked. She tried to keep the coolness from her voice but it slipped out anyway. Queenie’s eyes flickered. She nodded and handed over a note.

“It’s MACUSA again,” Queenie said quietly. “They want a report from you in two days.”

“You read through envelopes now?”

Queenie blinked, slow and even, before her face set. “Don’t get angry with me now.”

“You—“ But Tina stopped, took a deep breath. She just opened the envelope and read.

_No-Maj hysteria in fourth ward reaching critical levels after a fourth explosion. This one resulted in the death of seven No-Maj’s and the necessary Obliviation of over fifty others. If the explosions are related, find out how. Provide a report of relevant information in two days. We expect an interview with the red haired witness within the next week._

There wasn’t any greeting, and there wasn’t a signature. To be honest, she found this whole situation odd. Normally, the higher ups just gave her a case, an assignment, and then she went to it. This kind of overhead was unusual, and made her tense.

“Why do you think they’re hovering?” Queenie said. Then, “Oh, you don’t know. There’s a lot you don’t know. Sorry.”

“It’s not you, Queenie,” Tina met her sister’s concerned eyes. “And I’m sorry for snapping at you earlier.”

“No, sweetie, I’m sorry for messing with the…the moment. I was just so happy that you two finally stopped dancin’ around and—wait, you think he’s regretting it?”

Tina was too emotionally exhausted for this conversation. Instead, she went to the coat rack, and grabbed her favorite grey over coat, gloves, and a smart hat.

“Teen?” Queenie said.

“I’m going to do some research,” Tina said. “Like you know, I hate not knowing the answers. And it’ll help clear my head.”


“I won’t.”

Tina leaned in and kissed her sister’s cheek before heading out.

Chapter End Notes

Okay it's my first time writing a kiss scene so PLEASE be gentle with me :D Anyway thanks for reading!
At night, the grand windows of MACUAS stood dark and solemn. Inside, though, a warm glow emanated from the sconces that lined the walls. The high ceilings were like onyx. The Magical Exposure dial that hung above registered no threats. Despite that, Tina felt a bit unsettled with the quiet. It was a relief to get into the elevator and see Red blinking sleepily up at her.

“Goldstein? What floor?”

“Records and research, please Red.”

“’Kay.” They rumbled down. Tina stepped off into a huge, warehouse like space lit with dusty bulbs. Shelves and shelves of papers, books, and boxes yawned before her.

Tina took a deep breath and dove in. She had three goals tonight, a short list really: how someone used magic without their hands, what those tattoos were, and finally, who the men in masks were.

The clock chimed two before she finally called it. Despite her fatigue, she felt satisfied with her findings. The use of magic without a wand was hardly unprecedented, just unusual. Wands served as a way to use magic precisely. Using hands, then, showed a great level of control over magic. But Tina didn’t know what a magic person would do if they learned magic without ever touching a wand, which was her assumption about Moira, seeing her fear of their wands.

The tattoos, though, were less forthcoming in literature. There were mentions of other warrior cultures using them, as a sort of magic-augmenting battle paint. Except those markings—called Trade Marks—were non permanent. Not inked in tattoos. They had to be, since they fed on the wearer’s life force. But if someone had gotten around that…

Tina was at the lobby by then. A few years ago, someone had pitched the brilliant idea to open a coffee bar between twelve and four am. Tina praised that soul as she took a mug from the house elf working it. She sipped it a bit before she headed outside. She wanted to be alert. Apparating might not be the best idea in her addled state, but she didn’t like the idea of taking the subway. She could go into one of the dusty floo tunnels, perhaps…

But she was also a competent Auror, armed with wand and wits. She started walking towards the subway. Some people slept in the tunnels, probably to escape the bitter winds, and stayed asleep even as the train barreled through. She got on. The car was empty except for a young man standing in the center. He held a book in one hand, the safety bar in the other, and a pen in his mouth. He didn’t look at Tina. She wondered, for a second, why he was standing up, since there were plenty of open seats. Till she saw his eyes start to drift closed, then snap open.

Tina sipped her coffee. Normally she didn’t talk to people on the subway. They could be crazy or a
No Maj. But he seemed harmless enough. A kid, really. Talking would also keep her awake.

“Late nighter?” She asked.

The young man didn’t look up but nodded. With startling clarity, given the pen, he said, “Yes’m. Night classes.”

“In what?”

“Business accounting.”

She peered at the book. It was a collection of poems. The spine was well worn. She considered asking the young man about it, but he seemed completely engrossed and somehow, she didn’t want to disturb him. They rode on in silence. When she reached her stop, she hopped out and strolled up the two blocks to their apartment. Silence was her friend here, as Ms. Esposito had a curfew on the house. She made it into the apartment, closed the door, and sighed in relief.

Someone snored. She yelped and spun. Newt was sitting in a chair by the fire. He had his notebook open in his lap, and his head was tilted back with his mouth hanging open. Pickett was asleep on his head.

“Newt?” Tina whispered. He snored in response. Tina’s whole body relaxed, then curiosity got the best of her as she drew closer. Most of them time, people looked different when they slept. More relaxed, younger, innocent, etc. But Newt looked the same when he slept. It made Tina smile.

There was a ripple in the air, and then Dougal was there on top of his chair. Tina was proud that she didn’t jump. Dougal blinked his large eyes at her, though, almost smiling.

“Were you watching him?” Tina whispered. Dougal reached out and brushed Newt’s hair in a maternal gesture before he vanished again. She heard the creaks on the floorboards as he left.

She went back to watching Newt. It might be creepy, and she should really wake him up, but it was rare to be able to study him so intently without him getting embarrassed. And to be honest, his face was one worth studying. Handsome, with the firelight dancing over his strong cheekbones, catching in his messy hair, and sliding across his soft lips. Lips that were curled up at the corners, like he was smiling to himself even in his sleep.

Lips she wanted to kiss again.

However, something told her he’d probably like to be awake for that. So she shook him awake. He started up. His hands floated out in front of his face on instinct as he blinked blearily around.

“It wasn’t me,” he murmured.

Amused, Tina said, “What wasn’t you?”

He stopped shaking his head and then his eyes focused on her. “Oh, hello. Sorry.”

“Sorry?” Tina said.

“I came up to talk to you about…but you were gone, so I wanted to stay up for you. Pickett was supposed to keep me awake, actually,” his hand went to his pocket. Tina pointed to her hair. Newt reached up then and his fingers gently brushed the sleeping green creature. Newt shook his head. “Some help you are, Pick.”
Tina smiled. “Well, I’m here now. What ‘cha want to talk about?”

“Oh, right,” Newt straightened up. Half his hair was smashed down from sleeping in the chair, and he tried to straighten it, then remembered Pickett. So he left it as it was.

Newt was having a hard time forming words, though, when he could watch the embers shifting over Tina’s lovely face. He’d had a speech prepared at some point.

*I’m asking your forgiveness for my ineptitude in the physical interaction that we engaged in prior to you leaving, and if I took any untoward liberties…*

“Newt?” she prompted. Concern flashed in her eyes and she reached out like she was going to touch his face. He moved back. Now she looked hurt and he started speaking.

“I just wanted to apologize for being forward, earlier, in the case.”

Tina tilted her head, her expression serious. He held his breath, hoping he could just say that. They’d move on and he’d go back to his case and dream about her. And that would be enough. It would be.

“At what point were you forward?” Tina said.

Newt cursed inside for having to talk about it more, when just remembering it... “I mean…after Victoria…and before Queenie…”

“When you kissed me?”


“Ah yes, that.” But she was smiling again, and he was very confused. Did this mean everything was okay? That they were okay? What did okay mean? Could he kiss her again? Because he would really like to.

“Newt, you have this look on your face,” Tina said. “Like you’re thinking of saying a million things, but you’re not saying anything. And it’s kind of spooky.”

“I’ve wanted to kiss you since the first day I came back,” Newt burst out.

Tina’s mouth fell open.

“Oh,” Newt said to himself. “I just said that. Oh.”

He stood up and went to the fireplace mantle. He felt Pickett shifting in his hair.

She followed him over and grabbed his shoulder, trying to spin him. He did. He kept his eyes lowered. He couldn’t stand looking, seeing whatever was in her—

“Look at me, Newt. Please.”

But he also couldn’t resist her. Newt met her gaze. Her eyes flickered with warm, soft lights.

“I’ve wanted you to kiss me since you ran out the door,” Tina said. “Actually, I wanted you to kiss me the first time you got on that ship.”

“I wanted to,” Newt said quietly. “Kiss you then, I mean.”

Tina’s heart skipped. Still, she kept her voice soft. Coaxing. “Why didn’t you?”
“I was afraid, I think.” His lips twitched. “Silly, I know, a man my age and—“

“I don’t think it’s silly at all.”

His eyes glowed, met her’s. “A bit cowardly, though.”

“Newt Scamander. You fought off Grindelwald, chased creatures all around the world, and followed a raging Obscurus to save a young boy’s life. And that’s the short list. You are anything but a coward.” Then, Tina smiled. “Maybe a bit of a fool, but not a coward.”

Newt laughed. Taking advantage of his distraction, how close he was, Tina laid her hands against his chest, then slowly slid them up. His laugh stopped abruptly and he took a deep breath. Thrilled from her own power, Tina moved even closer, burying her face in his neck and inhaling him in. When she locked her hands around his neck, his breathing stopped completely.

Tina waited a moment. It felt like his heart would leap out of his chest.

“Newt?”

“…Hmm?”

She drew back. His eyes were pressed closed, his whole body tense. Like he was holding something tight inside.

“Could you…look at me, please?”

His eyes opened, almost against his will, to see Tina gazing up at him.

“What are you thinking?”

“Uh,” Newt glanced around, then back at her. He really shouldn't tell her that. A brilliant smile, almost coy, brightened her face. His skin was heating again. It wasn’t embarrassment. Her skin looked so soft, and before he knew it he was touching her face. His thumb traced over her cheekbone, the graceful curve of her jaw fitting into his hand so easily, her mouth…

“You should kiss me,” Tina said. “Right now.”

So he did. A million insecurities went through his head as soon her her lips brushed his, but at the same time he ignored them and just wrapped his arms around her waist. He just wanted her close. She gasped a bit, and that meant he could tilt his head, go further, breathe all of her in and still he wanted more...

Pickett squeaked awake.

Newt looked somewhere between embarrassed and concerned as he pulled back, but Tina just found herself staring at Pickett. He was waving his little arms and squeaking before he put his hands on his waist in a way that reminded her of Ms. Esposito, the one time she caught Tina out after curfew.

“What is he doing?” Newt asked, tracing the humor on her face.

“I think he’s lecturing,” Tina said.

“Well,” Newt reached up, and Pickett climbed onto his hand. Tina watched as consideration flashed over Newt’s face, and then when he met her eyes it was almost an apology.

“I need to put him somewhere to sleep. Same with Dougal, I think…”
“It’s fine, Newt.”

And it was. Tina was glowing like an idiot as she took his hand, and the two of them went to his case.

In his small apartment, Jacob bolted awake. Sweat plastered his sheets to his body and he threw them off and turned on a light. Bracing his hands on his knees, he took deep, sharp breaths.

But he could still hear it, see it, that massive, black and swirling…thing, that snarled and exploded worse than any bomb he’d seen, and he’d been so scared when Newt—

Jacob blinked. Then the memory was gone. His head felt weird, like it was stuffed with cotton.

He got up and went to the pitcher at the side of the room and splashed water onto his face. He looked into the mirror. A pale, sleep deprived man looked back at him. Even his hair looked a bit mad. Trying to make himself feel better, he smiled, and imagined Miss Queenie Goldstein smiling back at him. That was better. He was so wrapped up in the thought that he didn’t see something shift in the shadows.

And when that shadow came up behind him, Jacob didn’t even have time to cry out.

Chapter End Notes

Me: So...the updates might be slower...but now they're doing that kissing thing so that makes it worth it RIGHT ;D

Reader: who cares about romance WHAT IS HAPPENING TO JACOB?

Me:...oh right, that...

Thanks for reading! See you next time :D
World Spins

Chapter Summary

What is Moira afraid of?

Chapter Notes

Buckle up everyone it's about to get crazy.

Moira left the apothecary. Working with Mr. O'Connor had helped clear her head considerably, and now her satchel clinked with enough potions and tonics for another week’s errands. An almost perfect morning.

Besides the headache.

Moira rubbed her temples. Kai chirped and nuzzled her neck, but Moira still felt uneasy. Seeing a building explode would make someone uneasy. Especially when that building seemed completely fine and had no reason to explode.

No reason, just like the other ones.

Someone bumped into her. She looked up, recognized Mrs. Kay, one of the children's home runners. The woman ignored her. It didn't distract Moira, though. Something else must have happened to make her feel this drained. Extensive magic, or...She shook her head. No, maybe it was just a normal headache. Loads of people got headaches. It was all normal, quite normal, and there was plenty to be happy about.

Someone else bumped her as they went by. When she looked at them, they were framed by a green and white light. She blinked.

Not normal.

Suddenly, she wasn’t surrounded by people, but moving figures made of color and light. Sounds blended. It was like she’d stepped inside a kaleidoscope, and someone else was spinning the wheel. Each color was an emotion or a thought of an intention and she was going to vomit, or pass out, if she couldn't stop seeing.

A sharp pain in her shoulder, and then she was back.

Moira fell onto one of the stoops nearby. She didn't care if people stared. They always did that shit. Right now, her head was pounding, and the light was hurting her eyes. Besides, all those people who stared knew who she was. What she was. A freak who couldn’t even walk some days without breaking down in to the spirit layers.

Kai grabbed a lock of her hair and pulled. She ignored it. When he pulled again, though, she
couldn’t ignore him anymore. She smiled.

“I know I know,” she murmured, “Get it together.”

And she did. She had her tonics done for the next whole week, a friend on her shoulder, even Peter had a place to stay for the night that wasn’t her workshop. Everything was fine.

“Miss Moira?”

Moira straightened. Kai already turned his head and made a friendly cooing sound.

*Just what I need right now.*

“Miss Moira,” the same soft voice repeated. Moira got off the stoop just as the two goldbloods approached. Only this time, it was the middle of the day and in the middle of lunch hour. Did they not notice how everyone was staring at them?

And now staring at her. Again.

"So," Newt smiled. "I think we got off on the wrong foot the other day--"

Moira ran. Thankfully, the people got out of her way. It might have been Kai, but most of them had pitying looks in their eyes. Another kid being chased by authorities. The other good thing about the crowd was that it slowed the other two down as well, giving her plenty of time to select a side road that she knew would be deserted. Unwatched.

“Kai, hide,” she ordered. Kai hissed but flew up and out of the alley. The delay cost her.

Like she had a chance anyway. She felt the magic hit her back like a punch and her body went numb. Feeling of collapse came from a distance.

*The gods hate me today.*

Gritting her teeth internally, she could only lay helpless as they approached her, surrounded her. As soon as Newt waved his wand and blood pulsed again, she shoved her self up and back. The bricks bit into her coat.

“Don’t hurt me,” Moira said. "I haven’t done anythin’, I don’t know anythin’, I’m just—"

“We aren’t going to hurt you, Moira,” Newt said. “And I’m not here about the Kyran.”

Moira’s eyes darted from his face, its soft, kind expression, to Tina, who looked less friendly. And thanks to it being a day, Moira could easily see past to their auras. Newt’s was soft and spiraling yellow. Calm. Well meaning. Tina’s was moving faster, agitated, but there was no red or green. Neither held ill-intent.

Pain knifed through her head and she had to close her eyes. When she opened them, she just saw Newt’s face again. He looked concerned.

“Then…” Moira said. “Why are you here?”

Tina stepped forward. “We’ve heard that there has been suspicious activity in this corridor. Windows blowing out, valuables lost, then explosions…and most importantly, people going missing. No-Majs. And last night, there were deaths.”

Her heart sped up. Still, she managed a sneer. “People go missing ‘round here all the time. Didn’t
concern you all before.”
Tina’s eyes narrowed, but she kept her composure. “Do you know any useful information?”

“Like if they’re being eaten?” Newt added.

Moira blinked. “Eaten?”

“We have reports,” Tina said, sending a warning look to Newt. “That place you at the scene of each explosion. So you know something.”

Moira swallowed. “I don’t know anything.” She stepped back. She suddenly wished Kai was with her.

“Moira,” Newt said softly. “What are you afraid of?”

But if being alone was safe, it was the way to go. Moira turned on her heel. “No one. I’m not scared. You can go find ‘nother snitch.”

She’d made it all of six steps before Tina was in front of her again. But this time, she had an official notice in hand. Moira read the top.

*Infraction of Wizard Protection Act—No Maj exposure.*

“Yesterday,” Tina said. “At approxiamately twelve o’ clock, you used magic in front of a No Maj in a No Maj establishment,” Tina’s voice was flat. “This is a blatant violation of the Rappaport’s Law and is therefore punishable with up to a lifetime in prison. Add to that your lack of a wand registration and unregulated, underage use of magic outside of Ilvermony, you’re in some trouble.”

Moira tried to snatch the paper. Tina simply twisted her hand and the notice vanished.

“Take us to the place where the explosion was,” Tina said.

“Which one?”

“Well, all of them. But we can start with the most recent one. Then, I’ll burn the warrant.”

“No you won’t,” Moira spoke without thinking. “You’ll just keep using it till you get everything you want from me.”

Tina recoiled. Moira ignored it.

"If you do this," Tina said. "Then I promise that I will--"

Moira just turned on her heel and started walking. She assumed that they would follow.

Tina went back to Newt’s side. He’d remained quiet the whole time, but she’d also refused to look at him while she’d threatened Moira, knowing he’d find it wrong. And it was hard to look at him now. Especially now that she cared…either way, she had a job to do, and sometimes that meant being not nice.

“That didn’t seem right, somehow,” Newt finally said. “I don’t think threatening people is the best way to get help.”
“But it worked.”

Newt’s lips tightened, then he exhaled. “You know, when I’m approaching a creature that I’ve never seen before, I typically try to make myself as unthreatening as possible. To gain its trust.”

“Humans aren’t that easy, Mr. Scamander.” But Tina’s voice also softened. “We need to know what we’re up against. What she’s afraid of. And in the event that whoever scares her shows up, I want her to know that she’s safer with us then with them. That’s why I came off the way I did.”

Newt didn’t see the sense in her reasoning at all but decided to trust her. Instead, he moved back to the girl’s side. She flinched back when he reached into his coat. But when he pulled out a notebook, she visibly relaxed.

“So, we haven’t really been properly introduced. Well, I guess we have met, on the rooftop yesterday. And, I mean, you know our names, and, I guess we know your’s…”

Moira looked a bit confused, but since it wasn’t scared, Newt didn’t really mind. He flipped his journal to a random page and pointed it at her. “Moira, this is a Chinese Fireball, a species of dragon. Did you see anything like this at the scene of the explosion?”

“I didn’t see much on account of there bein’ an explosion,” Moira said. However, her gaze did linger on the creature. “I wish I had seen that, though. It looks wonderful fierce.”

"They really are. Especially in person."

Moira opened her mouth, like she was about to ask for more, then she snapped it shut and looked ahead. Her eyes darted above. Newt followed her gaze but saw nothing.

“We could Apparate there, you know,” Newt said.

“Can’t Apparate.”

"Oh, you never learned?"

"No. If you Apparate on Falcon turf, you'll get turned to bits."

“Bits?” Newt repeated as Tina drew up on Moira’s other side.

“We Apparated yesterday,” Tina said.

Moira shrugged. Tina took a deep, steadying breath. Kids were nice. Teenagers were the worst.

“Why would the Falcons not let people Apparate on their turf?”

Moira rolled her eyes. “In this burrow, the Falcons run things. They control what comes in and out, and they don’t take kind to strangers. Those guys you saw, that poured out of the chimney smoke? Falcons."

“I get it. Nasty fellows, aren’t they?”

“Sometimes.” Moira kicked a rock. “Starving makes them meaner.”

Then Moira moved a few steps ahead after that, obviously dropping the conversation.
As they walked, Moira was proud of how calm she must have looked to them. Collected. Because inside, she was panicking. The warehouses were far into Markus’ territory, and here she was, waltzing two Outsiders—a shitty Auror at that—deep inside it. She might as well paint a target on her front to match the one already on her back.

Don’t get scared, Moira. Get smart.

That notice hadn’t been a lie, and frankly posed a closer threat. If she kept quiet enough, and they kept their mouths shut enough, they might go unnoticed.

Her hands wouldn’t stop sweating. And her headache was getting worse. Her only comfort was Kai wasn’t anywhere nearby. She’d rather not end the day with Scamander stuffing him into a bag. Even though, he did seem nice, and he hadn’t tried—

“Moira?” Tina said.

Moira came out of her thoughts. The shops and tenements had been replaced by empty factory buildings. The sun had gone behind the clouds, too, and it felt way too quiet.

“Almost there,” Moira said. Then she turned a corner and the witch gasped. In front of them was the remains of a huge factory. The smoke stacks still stood in the center like two brick arms reaching up, but the rest of the insides were hollowed out and charred.

“Feel free to look around,” Moira said. "No one will notice, since they evacuated the whole block." But I'll stay over here. Away from any association.

But I'll stay over here. Away from any association.

Tina and Newt drew a few steps ahead. Tina seemed at a loss for words, staring at the wreckage. The wind was whistling around the building, making an almost beautiful, singing sound.

Wait. Moira listened. No, that was a woman singing. She looked around the empty buildings, but couldn’t detect any people. Which meant…

“Hey, um,” Moira said. The two looked at her in surprise. “Do you…hear that?”

“Hear what?” Newt asked. Tina looked suspicious and Moira continued, stilting.

“I mean…the singing?”

“Singing?” Tina turned around. “It’s just the wind. That’s all I hear.”

Moira nodded and looked down at her shoes. But no, it was a woman singing. She looked around the empty buildings, but couldn’t detect any people. Which meant…

Moira nodded and looked down at her shoes. But no, it was a woman singing. Something cheerful, but it was off key enough to make her cringe. And it was coming from the rubble. The other two were already heading into it. She followed, listening. Yes, the singing was getting stronger, and now she could hear other things. Metal working. Men chatting. She smelled oil.

She stepped through the half standing factory door and suddenly, she wasn’t in rubble but in a dark, enclosed space that was unbearably hot. She couldn’t breathe. Her hands and feet were tied. The smoke, the smoke was everywhere, and oh my god let us out please what did we do help us please…

“Moira!”

Moira snapped back to the present and caught herself before she stumbled. Mr. Scamander was giving her that look again, like he was about to offer her a handkerchief or something.

“Did you have…an episode?” Newt asked awkwardly.
Moira looked around. The rubble surrounded her, the air open and bright. The floor was cracked and scorched and ashes were piled everywhere. It was all safe and real.

“I’m fine,” Moira said. She was nauseus, and sweating, and now her headache returned full force. She rubbed her forehead. “It’s just…people died here. A lot of people. Recently. And my head hurts. And—that’s all.”

Newt looked ready to press but then Tina moved in front of Moira. She had a notepad out that was already covered in scribbles.

“Can you tell me what you saw?” Tina said.

“You mean…when?”

“When the explosion happened.”

Newt moved away from them. He pulled out that journal and walked around the perimeter, his hands occasionally tracing one of the scorch marks on the shell.

“Moira?” Tina prompted.

“Right. The explosion, it was big. And…loud.” Moira remembered it all clearly. The heat. The windows bursting out. The screaming on the inside. “And it burned far too fast. I was coming back from…from Mr. O’Connor’s place, and I heard this noise.”

“Noise?”

Moira deliberated, then went for it. “Screaming. I heard all this screaming.”

“What screaming?”

“Um. I think it was the…the people inside. The building, I mean. Suffering. I could—” feel it, she almost said, but caught herself just in time. She wrapped her arms around herself instead.

However, Tina’s expression didn’t change. If anything, it grew harsher.

“And after seeing all this, all that suffering, you didn’t come forward that you saw anything?”

Moira just stared at her. Shock cleared her head of thought. On the side, Newt stopped and glanced over.

“What—I don’t know what you mean.”

“I’ll get clear then,” Tina snapped.

“Tina?” Newt called but Tina blasted on.

“This is the problem I have with you people,” she said to Moira. “You make or see all these problems, or bad things happen, and you all just what, ignore it? Do nothing? Does people disappearing, dying, not matter as much as your paycheck for keeping silent?”

“Tina!” Newt cried. Tina stopped, but didn’t look away from Moira, who had long since put her eyes to the ground.

“Are you finished?” Moira asked quietly.
“For now.”

“Good, because, I have something to say.” Moira lifted her eyes. “I don’t know who made you think
you could treat me like this, but I’m not that person. So if you want my help, you’re going to treat me
like a human being. Or you can go to hell.”

The witch gaped at her. Then, her mouth snapped shut, and she looked away. If Moira wasn’t
wrong, that was shame in her eyes.

Just then, Newt yelled, “I know what happened here!”

Both women looked over.

“What?” Tina said.

Newt was pointing to the scorch mark behind him. It curved, serpentine, from the floor up the thirty
feet of wall left. Tina had to admit it didn’t look like a normal mark.

Then Newt was speaking, “The ignite point was here, probably, and see? The scratch marks, they
follow the scorches,” his feet slid across the floor, tracing lines Tina couldn’t see, as his hands waved
over the walls. “And it looks like the creature was breathing fire at the same time as it moved through
the warehouse, and then—“ he reached the end of the ruined floor, but kept moving, back out of the
building.

Tina sighed. The explosion site was the only place they could investigate without a warrant, so
how…

“Is he…where is he going?” Moira said sharply. And before Tina could respond Moira ran after him.

Moira made it out of the rubble int time to realize which building Newt was heading towards. He
was still talking to himself, obviously wrapped up in his reimagining.

“Mister!” Moira said. “You can’t just walk around here!”

Newt then went around the corner. Moira followed. She heard the short click of heels behind her but
ignored them because Newt was heading right towards—

There.

Moira stopped.

From the outside, it looked like another brick factory. The only thing some what unusual was the
windows. They were completely black as if the space within had never known daylight. Newt stood
in the open doorway, a bright figure against the swallowing darkness. Darkness, Moira realized, was
seeping out the windows, out the door frame, dripping towards Newt, reaching…

Wrong! Her inner voice screamed. Run!

Then Newt vanished inside.

“Newt?” Tina said from behind her. Moira was already running towards the building. Inside, she
couldn’t see in front of her face. She turned but the door had slammed shut. She was encased in the
dark, in air that seemed ten degrees cooler and damp. Something dripped to the side.

Her headache vanished.
Then, in front of her, a pinprick of white light expanded. Newt Scamander stood with his wand aloft. His blue coat glowed like a star as he looked around. Moira flew to his side, relief and fear warring in her.

“Mister Scamander,” she said. “We have to leave.”

Newt didn’t seem to be listening. His eyes traced the walls in shock. “These…these markings…”

Moira just yanked harder on his coat. “We need to go now.”

“Do you--do you know what they mean?”

Moira was saved from answering by light cutting across the space. They both turned to see Tina outlined in the doorway.

“Tina!” Newt said. “Keep the door open, and cast a *Lumos* charm!”

Moira read Tina’s hesitation in the bend of her body as she crept forward, but she did as Newt requested. With both of the wands, almost the whole space was illuminated. It wasn’t an improvement. The walls were not scorched, but caked in a dark liquid that still oozed over the walls, outlining twisted dark symbols. The floor was carved with rifts that spiraled out from a single point—where Newt stood. The spirals were surrounded by a dark, scorched circle, giving the appearance of a twisted wheel. And in the air was a sense of tension, foreboding. Like something was waiting in the corner to spring.

“What,” Tina said, “happened, here? This wasn’t an explosion site.”

“Please, both of you,” Moira begged. Her head was screeching. “We need to leave. Before they find us. Before they—”

“You know what happened here!” Tina spun on her. “Tell us.”

Moira could hear them, now. Their nails scratching in the corners. Their hisses echoing in the dark. Did they not hear them?

“Moira,” Newt grabbed her arm before Moira realized she was swaying. “Are you alright?”

But Moira couldn’t speak. Her whole body was locking down. The hissing had grown louder, a screaming now, words she couldn’t understand. The shadows were taking shape in the corners. People waiting. It was cold, so very cold here. Someone called her name from far away.

*Protect me,* she whispered within. Heat poured through her body and over her skin. Newt jerked back from her. Around her body was a shield, then, pale rose in shade. More importantly, she couldn’t hear the darkness anymore.

Her chest loosened. When she could focus her eyes again, both of them were staring at her. Newt looked shaken. Tina looked pale, but that might have just been—

Something screeched.

“What was that?” Tina demanded.

Moira’s stomach dropped into her shoes. “That was Kai.”

“The Kyran?” Newt said. “Is he alright?”
Another screech, three bursts and then silence.

“Yeah,” Moira said. “But we won’t be.” Moira lodged her hands in her hair, her eyes blinking fast. “Okay. Three men and five minutes. Okay.”

“What does it mean?” Newt said. “Wait, you got all that out of Kai’s call?”

Without an explanation, Moira grabbed his arm and hauled him to the side, outside the dark circle on the ground. Newt let himself be hauled.

“What are you doing?” Tina demanded.

“Stand there,” Moira said to Newt. Then she reached into her coat and drew a knife.

“Woah!” Tina jumped in front of Newt. “What are you—“

“Good!” Moira nodded. She grabbed Tina’s arm and pulled her next to Newt. “You two just stand right there. Nice and close together.” She crouched down and, using the knife’s tip, traced a circle around them.

“Why are you doing this?” Tina asked.

Moira didn’t look up. “It’s simple. I can’t be seen with you, and you can’t be seen with me.”

“So a mystical circle is going to help,” Newt said.

“Yes. Can you move your foot in?”

When Tina didn’t, Moira nudged her foot in.

“Why are—“

“Shh!” Moira closed her eyes. “I have only a minute or so.”

With quick movements Moira scratched four symbols into the ground. Even though her rune knowledge was rusty, Tina was pretty sure the markings weren’t normal. When Moira finished drawing them she placed her knife in the very center of the four marks. She closed her eyes, inhaled, exhaled, and said,

“Let them be unheard and unseen, and when all is said and done, released.”

Magic poured down her arm, through the knife, around the circle and then up and over Newt and Tina’s heads. Newt’s hair rose. It felt like he’d stepped into the middle of a thunder cloud. Done, the shield shimmered gently around them. Newt reached out to touch it—and it vanished.

Moira exhaled and rose. Her eyes didn’t meet theirs, but she nodded.

“Just keep still, okay? I’ve got this.”

“What?” Tina said. “You’ve got what?”

“And if anything goes south, get out of the building.”

“South?” Newt and Tina said.

Moira might have responded but then the wall exploded.
Sorry if that was a long one! Lots of ground to cover. Hope you enjoyed it :D I'm trying to keep my updates to once a week so hold me to that!
Comments welcome! *hugs*
Hey you guys I changed the ending of the previous chapter a bit, so if you haven't seen those updates read that then this. Or you can read it now and go with it. Either way enjoy!

Tina screamed as rubble flew at them. Light poured into the space, blinding Newt, but he threw his arms around Tina on instinct to shield her however he could.

But nothing hit them.

Newt’s eyes cracked open. Before him, Moira stood. Her body was lowered and braced, and in front of her palms was a huge, flat shield of red magic. Dust slid off it. She looked back at them. Her eyes were as red as the shield in her hands. Despite it, she was shaking, sweating. It suddenly occurred to him how young she probably was.

Moira faced ahead.

In the gaping light, three figures were outlined. They moved forward with predatory ease. The one in the center, the tallest, called out first.

“Well, it’s our very own Ghost Girl!!”

Moira released her stance. The red shield vanished. She moved one hand behind her back and with a flick of her fingers, the knife reappeared in it.

Tina gasped.

Moira twisted her wrist and the knife disappeared. Her hand stayed behind her back though. Her fingers twitched like a piano player’s.

“What was that for?” Tina whispered.

Newt couldn’t answer.

The three reached Moira then. Tina tensed against Newt, and his arms tightened around her, but none of the three acknowledged their presence. So they were invisible. At any other time Newt would be intrigued.

Something odd. The three all had similar posture, stance, and wore black caps with a small feather tucked into the side. The one in the center, the eldest, was handsome in a trickster kind of way. Dancing blue eyes that held little warmth passed over Moira’s frame before reaching her eyes.

“You look disappointed,” he said. His voice was softer then Newt expected.

“Where’s Declan?” Moira demanded. “You’re not supposed to be out on your own.”

“Well, our friend Gerald took the day off today. So I s’pose it’s just me you have to deal with.”
The two others fanned out, slowly surrounding Moira. Moira didn’t move. Didn’t acknowledge the two, really. She stared at the center young man.

“Ferdi,” she finally said. “Something’s terrible wrong. Even you should see that.”

“You’re right. It starts with what looks like a violation of the Falcon’s no-trespassing order.” Ferdi’s smile widened. “Just wait till Markus gets a load of this ‘un. He aint lettin’ you—“

“I’m not talking about that!”

Ferdi’s smile froze. The other two boys stilled as well. Obviously, Ferdi was not one you interrupted. Moira continued. She pointed to the dark ring. “That, is the real problem. Care to tell me how a full Spirit Seal made its way into Markus’ warehouse?”

Ferdi tilted his head. His friends exchanged a look. Moira’s eyes narrowed.

“I knew it. I knew Markus was up to something.”

“Give the girl a damn medal,” Ferdi said to himself. Then, “you really shouldn’t meddle into things that aren’t yours. People die that way.”

“I’ve noticed since people have been dying.”

“Just No-Maj’s.”

“Right. Just them.” Moira stepped closer. “So, I was just wondering, is Markus setting the explosions to kill people? Or just to distract from all the kidnapping?”

Behind her back, Moira pointed towards what she called the Seal. Her hand shook. Newt was confused by it but then Tina pulled out her notebook and began writing. But of course! Answers. Moira was giving them answers. Newt wanted to write them down as well but he couldn’t take his eyes off Moira. Ferdi’s eyes were growing steadily hotter, his smile nastier.

“You’re being so clever and bold today,” Ferdi said. “I thought your brother had taught you a lesson about that.”

It took Moira moment to respond, and Newt wished he could see her face because the two other guys were snickering, like Ferdi had hinted at a secret. But as the silence stretched on their laughter faded.

Newt’s heart was racing. He could barely breathe.

Finally, Moira shrugged. “Fine, then I won’t meddle anymore. Now if you excuse me…”

And Moira did that thing again, where she just started walking. She even passed Ferdi on her way out. No looks back. As if she fully assumed the other three would follow. The two younger ones did. Maybe they thought the whole thing was over.

“She’s leading him away,” Tina murmured. “From us.”

Newt nodded.

Then Ferdi jumped in front of Moira and their small hope died.

“Who said you could call the shots?” Ferdi said.
Moira’s eyes flashed. Her voice sharpened, iced over.

“If you’ve got a fight in your mind, it’s not happening here.”

Ferdi’s fists clenched. “Who says I’d let you leave?”

“I did,” Moira said, quite calm. “And you should know better then to mess with me here.”

“You don’t scare me, spirit whore.”

Moira’s smooth façade cracked, allowing a flicker of flame in her eyes.

“You don’t call me that,” she spat.

“Call you what? Spirit—“

Suddenly, the air dropped twelve degrees, and Newt heard hissing, coming from the dark shadows, as if a thousand snakes were drawing closer. A sour taste filled Newt’s mouth. Tina gagged next to him. She whipped out a hand and it cracked against the air like she’d smacked a wall.

Tina stared blankly in front of her. Newt drew his wand, and tried to cast a Lumos charm, but it merely bounced off the shield. Helpless, they could only see the wind as it kicked up inside the building, blowing dead leaves and dust into the air. The slime on the walls was bubbling.

The two younger Falcons ran, then. Without looking back. But Ferdi didn’t move. His excited eyes latched onto Moira like she was a lightning strike.

And she was in a way. The magic around her body had brightened and heightened and her eyes glowed white. Her hair floated around her head. It was like the darkness was feeding off of her, or she was feeding the darkness, or—

Moira stepped back.

Instantly, the sounds and dark wind vanished. From the corner of his eye, Newt saw the huge black circle shimmering. When he blinked again it was still.

“This isn’t even about me, is it?”

Moira’s voice was soft. She had her hands pressed against her ears, her eyes closed, taking deep breaths. Her voice shook. “This isn’t about me at all.”

Even Ferdi looked thrown. “Excuse me?”

Moira opened her eyes.

“You’re not Ferdi.”

Ferdi moved faster then humanly possible and in a breath he had picked Moira up by her lapels and threw her. She flew impossibly far, crashing into the wall on the side with a sickening thump.

No words were necessary as Newt and Tina both struggled to get out of Moira’s shield. But it resisted. Was it even connected to Moira anymore?

Ferdi practically strolled to Moira. Green magic pulsed over his body, through the markings now visible all over his hands. His expression was murderous.
“Who do you think you are?” Ferdi cried.

Moira scrambled back from him but her hand hit the black ring and she cried out like she’d been scalded. It was the chance Ferdi needed. He grabbed her again and this time, he held her there, hands around her neck, and Moira kicked and struggled.

“Moira!” Newt yelled. “Let us out!”

“You know,” Ferdi said. “There was one ingredient missing for the Seal. Can you guess what it was?”

Moira’s eyes rolled back in her head.

“Moira!” Tina screamed. She slammed her hands against the shield. “Let us out! We can help you! Please!”

Now Newt threw spell after spell at the shield, hardly processing what he was trying to do. Finally, he saw a crack form before him.

“Tina!” Newt cried. Tina joined him and, together, they broke the shield apart.

Newt flung a disarming curse at Ferdi. It smashed into his back. He flew forward. Released, Moira collapsed on the ground, scrambling away from the circle and coughing. Tina dashed to her side.

“Are you alright?” Tina demanded. She grabbed Moira and hauled her up. “Are you okay?”

Moira rubbed her neck. Red markings were already developing but she just shook her head and pointed at Ferdi.

“He’s… the circle…”

Tina looked up. Ferdi was facing off with Newt. Newt had his wand raised and damn he looked almost terrifying, rage in every line of his body and his face whitened.

“Who are you?” Newt demanded.

Ferdi shook himself off and rose from the ground. His eyes darted to Tina, to Moira, back to Newt. His twisted little smile sent a chill down Newt’s spine.

“I would think you’d remember me,” Ferdi said. “I’m a bit famous, after all.”

_We all die a little._

Ferdi stepped back into the black circle and all the light vanished in the warehouse.
Moira repeated this to herself. Over and over. Over the screams, over the darkness, over the sound of Tina screeching into her ear if she was alright. She tried to tell her she was but her damn voice wasn't working.


Moira pulled her arm out of Tina’s grip and covered her eyes. See, she thought. Her palms warmed, her eyes burned a second, then she removed her palms and could see.

First, she looked for the blonde psycho. But she saw no one else in the building. Had he Apparated? Maybe. And who was that guy anyway? Even Scamander looked ready to kill him...for what he did to her, or for another—the floor shook, throwing both she and Tina to the ground. Moira's body barely felt the ground. She cleared her head. No, blondie wasn’t important right now. She needed to evaluate the situation.

It wasn’t pretty.

They’d been lucky before, so lucky, that the Seal hadn’t been activated. Otherwise, it would’ve fed on the unprotected souls of Tina and Newt, and they’d both be dead.

They didn’t have that luxury now.

Dark smoke rose from the ring. The ring itself was glowing sickly green and appeared to spin faster and faster. It would expand, soon. Trapping them.

There wasn’t much time.

Abandoning Tina for the moment, Moira ran to Newt’s side. Closest to the ring, the spirits trapped in the seal were already starting to feed off of him. It would feel like being surrounded by Dementors. His face was pale, drawn. He was too prone to even cry.

Moira grabbed him. His skin was ice.

“Scamander!” she yelled. But no sound came out of her mouth. Her neck was still screaming from almost being...being...nope don’t think of that not that.

She started dragging him across the floor. His weight felt like nothing thanks to the tons of magic pouring through her shield. Then, when he was far enough away to try and struggle away from her —why is he struggling I’m trying to help you idiot—she grabbed his hand and pressed it to her face.

“Moira?” he croaked. She nodded and yanked him up. She wrapped an arm around his back, pulled his arm over her shoulder, and carried most of his weight over towards Tina. Almost all the light was gone now, blocked in except—there! An opening in the slime walls, getting smaller and smaller. She could see the factories outside. Sunlight. Safety. The three of them, they could make it.
Tina was still on the ground. Moira reached her and gracelessly threw Newt at her. The two, blind, scrambled to hold each other and Newt pressed his nose into Tina’s hair, and Tina wrapped her arms around him like he was a raft. They were shaking.

On another day, it would be cute.

But not right now.

With a blast of energy, the ring exploded into a full tornado of shadows. The air became so cold it was like ice in even her protected lungs, and the floor splintered under her feet. Moira’s ears vibrated with the dead’s wails. Tina and Newt had covered their ears, yelling at each other. They both looked so scared. And dying.

Moira looked at the tornado. Between the swirls of shadow she saw dark, barely shaped humans, with gaping mouths and dead eyes. They pressed their hands against the spinning walls and screamed. Because they were trapped spirits, and trapped spirits only wanted one thing, and if she wasn’t careful, they’d kill Tina and Newt for it.

Moira looked at the opening to the outside. It was shrinking by the second.

Well, Moira thought. It was already a bad day anyway.

She whipped her arms and a shield appeared between her hands. It was so, so very easy to pull her magic free this time. With delicate motions of wrist and her fingers she wrapped the shield around Tina and Newt like a blanket, jostling them together, lifting them into the air—and then propelling them out through the opening.

She saw the two splay on the sidewalk. Tina sat up first, and met Moira’s eyes. The Auror looked terrified and reached out, and maybe she screamed Moira’s name, but Moira couldn't hear it.

The darkness closed in.

Tina had no idea what she was looking at. It was like the factory was still before her, but the walls were…it was like the whole building was a mirage, rippling and shifting before her eyes. Shadows circled behind the windows. From the outside, though, she could no longer hear that god-awful wailing. Feel that hopeless coldness. Thankfully, her body was warming, growing stronger. It was like all the horror was sealed inside the building somehow.

She looked at Newt. He was dead pale, sweating, but conscious.

“What do we do?” he said quietly. His eyes drifted to the building. "What is that?"

“I don’t know,” Tina replied. She could still see Moira. How the girl had practically carried Newt over to Tina like some sort of body builder, then used incredibly powerful magic to launch them out of the building. Then, the last time she’d seen Moira. The girl had been framed by the darkness behind her, her whole body outlined with white light, her hair like a bloodburst around her head.

Then nothing.

Tina jumped up. No. She wouldn’t do nothing.

“We need to contain it. And break it, somehow,” Tina said. She looked down on Newt. “Can you stand?”
Newt nodded and rose. He wavered. Tina caught his elbow, peered at his face. His eyes were haunted.

“What…happened to you?” Tina said.

“Have you ever been attacked by a Dementor before?” Newt said. “It’s a curious thing, what they can do. They take your happiness away and they feed on your suffering. It felt like that but—”


Newt pulled out his wand at the same time Tina did.

“Okay, a shield,” Newt said. “Maybe one like Moira had created that could—“

Tina didn’t know what hit her but it knocked her flat to the ground. Newt fell on top of her. Then it felt like some great weight pressed even further, pinning them both to the ground. Blue light clouded her vision.

“Another shield?!?” Tina screeched. Newt squirmed, trying to move.

"I dropped my wand," Newt said. "Do you have yours?"

Heavy work boots ran past her face. The shield blurred her vision a bit, but soon the figure ran in front and she made out the shape of a man. Something flew over his head, a bright blue—the Kyran!

The young man halted at the sight of the factory. Undaunted, the Kyran flew up and over the building, then spun back, screeching like the air was poison to his skin. The young man shook his head and then swept out his arms, twisted his wrists, and spun. It almost reminded Tina of dancing until huge tendrils of blue magic shot out of his palms and over the building. The young man kept moving. Sharp, precise movements. One made his black cap fall, revealing a tumbleweed of brown hair. Above, the magical tendrils wove together, forming a cage over the building. When he stopped, the cage blended into a single shield that rippled and pulsed.

The trap over Tina and Newt winked out. Now freed, Tina shoved herself up—almost accidentally kicking Newt in the process—and ran up to the guy. From behind he appeared to be scratching something into the dirt. The Kyran was sitting on his back, peering up at the shield. It spotted Tina and spread its wings and hissed.

“We can’t go in yet, Kai,” The young man said. “Moira’ll be fine.”

“Who are you?” Tina demanded.

The young man tensed. Otherwise, he didn't move. Tina approached first, trying to ignore how the building behind the shield was shaking. Behind it, the windows of the factory flashed from being full of white light, back to darkness. It was like a thunderstorm was contained inside.

Tina and Newt exchanged a look.

“I’m not going to ask again,” Tina said. "Who are—“

The factory exploded.

Kai screeched and the young man braced himself but the shield held in the debris. Tina could see how the darkness was fighting—fighting against magic of all colors. It was like watching a fire fight a fire. It was beautiful in a terrible way. Finally, the colorful magic swallowed the darkness, and then
both magics vanished. Rubble rained down. Dust swirled like a snow globe under the shield.

Quiet.

The young man leaned down and rubbed his hand on the dirt. Tina hadn’t noticed, but markings glowed all over his hands. The shield disintegrated.

*What magic is this?* Tina wondered to herself.

As soon as the shield was gone, the smoke expanded. Kai flew straight into it.

The young man turned his head. He had familiar, owl-like green eyes, and then Tina started.

“Night classes kid?” Tina said. "On the train."

“I prefer Gerald,” the young man said. Then without another word he ran into the smoke.

Not knowing what else to do, Tina and Newt followed with much more caution. The air smelled of sulfur, and some metallic tang that reminded Tina of blood. Stifling dust. Tina had to cover her mouth with her jacket to breathe. As the smoke cleared, Tina soon realized that the building itself had…vaporized, almost. The only piece left was the floor and even that was cracked.

She heard the Kyran scream. She turned, expecting to find Newt, but he was no longer at her side. So she continued alone, following the Kyran sound, until she reached a spot of clear air.

Gerald was crouched next to a crumbled form. Tina’s heart plummetted and she stopped, paralyzed for a moment. The Kyran stood by the form’s head, screeching like a lost child, and the young man had his head in his hands, too still.

Tina moved one step. The dust softened her footfalls, all she could hear was her heart. All she could see was another young face, paralyzed and afraid and crying.

*Not another Credence, please.*

“Is she...” Tina lifted her voice and strode forward. “Is she dead?”

Gerald turned. He stared without blinking at her for what felt like an eternity, then he shook his head, slowly.

Tina let her breath loose and sank down beside Gerald. In front of her, Moira was curled up like a small child asleep, with her hand fisted against her chest. Not trusting the kid to be a doctor, Tina grabbed Moira’s wrist. Her arm was scratched up and bleeding but the skin was surprisingly warm and the pulse was strong and clear.

“Like I said,” Gerald murmured. “Not dead.” Then, he turned that unnervingly still look on Tina. “You’re that Auror she was talkin’ about. Were you the one that led her here?”

“What?”

“She wouldn’t come here on her own,” Gerald’s eyes flickered, and then he blinked. “For good reason.”

Before Tina could ask about those reasons, Moira's eyes flew open and she gasped for air. She sat up with a burst then hissed in pain and almost fell back, but Gerald braced her with his arm. Moira's eyes rolled up to Gerald's pale face.
"Declan?" Moira said, looking at Gerald. "What are you—"

"Kai brought me," Gerald replied. Kai jumped onto Gerald's shoulder in confirmation. Moira's eyes drifted around, then suddenly her body seized up. Her one hand flew up and grabbed Gerald's shoulder, twisting into the fabric like she thought she was going to float away.

"Moira?" Gerald said.

"It was...it was a Seal," Moira was blinking fast, and her accent was way stronger. "A full Seal, and Markus...I think he's been...the Seal, the Seal would require so many souls and I think Markus is killin' them, killin' them all—"

“Killing who?” Tina interrupted but Moira didn’t seem to hear.

“... and they were trying to tell me, Declan, and I wanted to listen, but it hurt..."

"Moira?" Tina said.

Moira's eyes finally flickered over. Tina almost wished the girl hadn’t looked at her because now Tina couldn’t stop staring. Cuts weren’t only on Moira's arms, but on her face, neck, legs. Her bone white face and huge, dark eyes made her look like a skeleton. She was shaking.

I did this, Tina thought. God, she was just a kid, and Tina had put her into this situation. And for what?

“What are you...” Moira shook her head. “You were supposed to run.”

“We weren’t going to leave you!” Tina said. Just then, Newt found them. He hesitated a moment before he crouched down beside Moira. Moira’s eyes registered him.

“You...you were going to kill him.”

“Kill who?” Newt said. But he was distracted by the scratches on Moira. He lifted his wand towards her.

The reaction was instant. Moira whimpered and started back in Gerald’s arms. Instantly, Gerald’s hand flew up and in front of Newt’s face, and any softness was gone from the young man’s expression as he regarded Newt.

Newt held his gaze and kept very still. Even as magic poured into Gerald’s palm.

“I’m just going to heal her wounds,” Newt said. “And that’s it.”

Gerald didn’t move. Tina considered drawing her own wand, but Newt just continued. “We need to get her somewhere safe and we can’t do it in her current state. I promise, that’s all I will do, and then I will put my wand away.”

After a tense pause, Gerald lowered his hand. Newt waited a second before reaching out. Moira didn’t move. So Newt carefully lifted one of her arms, his wand tip tracing over the cuts. Scars lay alongside them.

"Is Kai here?" Moira asked. Her eyes were glazing over, up at the sky.

"He's here," Gerald said. "He brought me here. I...told you that."

"Oh," Moira said.
"Moira," Tina finally said. "Can you tell us what just happened?"

“You were supposed to run.”

“No, not that, I mean—”

"It's what always happens. To me, anyway."

Before Tina could ask for more, Moira lost consciousness.

Chapter End Notes

Okay everyone can take a breather now. Hope you enjoyed the plethora of action tho! *hugs* and have a lovely weekend :D
“Moira, tell me what you saw again?”

Mother stood by the sink, the light catching on her faded red hair. Green hills rolled by outside.

“Papa was lying in bed, coughing,” I said. “And then he went still. Then he got out of bed, kissed me on the forehead, and left out the door.”

“That’s impossible.” A high male voice said. Liam stood by the open door with an armful of wood. He looked angry.

“Liam,” Mother chided. Then she said to me. “You saw him walk and leave, Moira?”

“Yes, but— “ My heart was beating wrong. “Is he not coming back?”

“No, he’s dead.”

"Liam!"

Liam and Mother exchanged a look, then Mother came and took me into her arms. I was crying. Mother’s voice shook.

“Moira, has this happened before? Do you sometimes see people that aren’t there?”

“Wh...I don’t...I’m scared, why isn’t he coming back?”

Liam crouched down as well, brushing my hair back.

“Muma, I don’t get it,” I sobbed, “Why did I see him? Why do I see them? They walk around the hills, and they cry, and they reach out to me but their hands go through me. They aren’t like you or Liam, they just cry.”

“Moira, I need you to listen carefully right now,” Mother drew back. “Very carefully. Okay?”

I nodded. Liam took my hand. He looked scared too.

“You, my dear, are a very, very rare witch,” Mother said. “Who can do incredible things. And when
we get to America, I will tell you everything about it."

“Everything?”

“Yes, my love, everything.”

Moira knew she wasn’t waking up in her bed. For one, it was too soft. Two, it didn’t smell like plants. No train hummed outside.

There was someone breathing, though, close by. She kept her eyes shut. She did an internal check of her body, carefully shifting this way and that. There were no aches, twinges. Even her neck felt better. Hell, she felt like she could climb a mountain with all the energy in her. So physically, she was fine.

Just physically though. Her head was fluttering faster then a hummingbird’s wings. She had no idea how long she’d been out. And the dream she had left her unsettled, though she couldn’t quite remember what it was about. But she could still remember her mother’s face in it, so that was never a good sign. Mother and Liam. And she’d been crying.

Fine. She was fine. Physically, anyway.

It felt like ages since she’d left Mr. O’Connor’s shop. Trying to string moments together felt frantic. And what had O’Connor said? Something about Declan needing—

Declan.

Moira’s eyes flew open. Above her was a well-kept ceiling. Her eyes darted to the right. There was a simply made bed against faded wallpaper in an electric lit room. Someone had left a glass of water on the side table there. Reaching for it, the bed creaked, and she looked around to see if anyone had noticed.

That’s when she saw Declan.

He sat in a kitchen chair next to her bed. He had the chair backwards, so his hands rested on the back, and his chin rested on his hands. His hair was standing up all over the place the way it always did when he’d been running his hands through it.

She stared, taking maybe an unfair advantage of his sleep. Sometimes, she seemed to forget what he actually looked like. Or, she saw different Declans. She saw a nine year old Declan kicking a ball at her face, or she saw a twelve year old Declan scavenging with her and Liam under bridges, or she saw sixteen year old Declan, when he’d first joined the fighting rings, with his face all beat up and bleeding.

Declan, you need to teach me magic so I can heal you faster.

Wanna learn something, Mo? I’ll teach you this if you teach me somethin’.

Like what?

Now, the only sign of the fighting past was his crooked nose and a few scars on his face. His hands were scarred up too, but now with Trade Marks as well.

Well, that was enough memories for one night.

Moira reached out and shoved his shoulder. It almost sent his head flying into his hands and Declan
bolted up. He blinked a few times—he had the biggest eyes she’d ever seen on a boy—and then those eyes were on her.

“How you feelin’?” he asked, his voice a bit raspy from sleep.

“Good,” Moira pushed herself up but Declan shook his head.

“Don’t move too much. That Scamander did a few spells to heal you.” His eyes darted over. “Do you need water?”

“I feel fine,” Moira repeated. Ignoring her, Declan waved his hand. The Trades shimmered, and the glass righted itself and filled with water, then floated over to Moira. She took it and watched him over the rim. Declan stretched his arms over his head and yawned, then shifted to be more comfortable in the chair. Once he caught her eye, though, he leaned forward in his chair.

“You’ve got that look,” he said. “You might as well fire ‘em off.”

“Where am I?”

“Miss Goldstein’s home.”

“Miss...what?” Moira searched her memories, but even though the last moments were sketchy, she definitely did not remember agreeing to come here.

“We didn’t consult you, no,” Declan said. “But that might be because you were unconscious and bleeding.”

Moira opened her mouth to snap something back, but when she looked at Declan his lips were tight, his fingers drumming on the chair as her regarded her.

“Oh,” Moira said. “I...sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“You should know I’m used to it by now.”

Moira felt wary, wondering what he meant. Declan’s lips quirked and the tension left his frame.

“Oh c’mon, Mo. I know you got more questions than that.”

“Fine. The Seal?”

“What about it?”

“Did I break it?”

“Yes.” No smile now. “You destroyed it, and the spirits were freed.”

“Good.” That explains why I feel like I could run seven marathons right now. When she broke up a Seal, the spirits that were released passed through her, and left some of their power behind. And all the dead explained her headache, earlier that day. It explained other things too. Like the disappearances and the restlessness. The real question was what the hell Markus thought he was doing letting such dark magic loose.

“Next question?” Declan prompted. Her eyes snapped back to his. That wasn’t a question she could ask Declan. He was already risking enough being here with her. So instead, she asked,

“Is Kai okay?”
Declan nodded. “Once he saw you settled, he left out the window.”


“How d’you mean?”

“I mean Markus.”

Declan’s expression clouded over. “It’s been twenty four hours, and he’s not makin’ a scene, but he’s got his people everywhere for you.”

Moira started up. “My workshop?”

“Safe,” Declan said.

“Thank God.”

“But I don’t think you should go back for a few days, at least.”

“A few days?” Moira repeated. “But—but my plants! And my work! I can’t just stop, people depend on—”

“Mr. O’Connor told me that you had enough work done to last you the next week.”

_Damn you_, she thought, and Declan smirked. Still, the humor was far from his eyes. Concern, though, he appeared full of. It made Moira twitchy.

“Well, what do you expect me to do then, hmm?” Moira said. “Stay here? With two Goldbloods, one who’s trying to steal Kai and the other who thinks I’m the one blowin’ shit to hell?”

Declan rested his chin on his hands and watched her. Moira crossed her arms. It felt like ages went by, during which Moira began to sweat and still Declan just stared without blinking, smiling just a little. She knew Declan, and his silences. This one was one of his “I have something to say, but you’ll say it first” silences. She hated those.

“If you got somethin’ to say,” Moira said. “I don’t want to wait for it.”

“Do you really think those two will hurt you?”

“You know I do. Better then most.”

Again, Declan said nothing. Moira sighed in exasperation.

“Look, I already said I hate waiting—“

“You should have seen Miss Goldstein’s look when she thought you were dead.”

Moira’s mouth hung open. One hand fist unconsciously in the sheets, but she couldn’t look away from Declan.

“She looked at you,” Declan said, “and thought, ‘I did this. And now I can never apologize.’”

“She was...going to apologize?”

“She did apologize, you just weren’t conscious for it. She and Scamander did. That’s why I let them take you here. I could sense their sincerity.”
Declan’s intuition wasn’t anything to snuff at, either. He’d always had an uncanny ability to read people. If he’d gone to school, he probably could’ve trained to be a Legilimens.

Declan sighed. “Fine. If you aren’t convinced, still, I’ll go get them and they’ll convince you.”

And without further explanation he went out the door. Moira kept still. She heard their voices outside, and her head spun.

Stay here? With them? Was Declan nuts? What had she missed while she was passed out? What did they possibly say to him to make him think she’d be safe with them?

But they tried to save your life.

Moira couldn’t deny that. She could remember Tina’s face, when she’d first woken up. And Newt’s face, when he’d almost...hexed Ferdi, who hadn’t been Ferdi at all. And Newt had been the ones to heal her wounds, hadn’t he? He’d never given Moira that look, like Moira was a monster.

Her chest was hurting, and it had nothing to do with the fight.

But as soon as that pain set in, fear cozied up as well. If Markus ever found out what Declan did for her, he’d...Liam’s face flew into her mind and Moira clapped a hand over her mouth before she could make a noise. Her heart was flying.

She needed to leave. Before she could get anyone else hurt. She’d leave the burrow. Hell, maybe she’d leave the city.

Coward.

 Damn straight.

Her eyes went to the window. A glance at the doorway revealed little, but she didn’t have any other opportunity. She stole across the room, grabbing her coat on the way there, and flung the window open. Peering down, she winced at how high up it was. Still, she could buffet her fall, prevent any real damage. It would work out.

She was half out the window when someone grabbed her around the waist and pulled. Moira clung to the frame. Then lips were by her ear.

“Don’t,” Declan said. “Make me use magic.”

“Likewise, you stubborn arse.”

Declan sighed and yanked harder and Moira let go. She spun on him and vaguely felt the cold breeze seeping through the window. Ignored his look of disappointment and the pang of regret she felt in causing it.

“I’m not risking anyone else’s life, Declan.”

“We aren’t asking you to.”

“God, you’re so—” Moira threw her hands in the air. “Just think, Declan. This isn’t the time to be noble. Or not about me. What about your family?” When Declan’s eyes flashed, Moira kept hitting her mark. “What will Markus do when he finds out you’ve helped me? Just think for a second. Your mum, your sisters and brothers, what’ll they do without you? Or what would Markus do...do to them, like he did to Liam, and I can’t—“
“Woah woah,” Declan waved his hands and stepped back. “Moira, that’s not gonna happen.”

“You can’t know that!”

Moira realized she’d screamed it. Declan paled. Then, his eyes set, and he took another step closer to her. Moira almost felt the need to back away.

“I want you to think, Moira,” Declan said. “Because I have. I’ve considered what this will mean for my family because my family includes you. What do I have to do to prove that to you? You and him, you were always—” but Declan cut himself off.

Silence fell around them, but not between them. And suddenly Moira just felt tired.

“Okay,” she said.

Declan nodded. There was a beat of silence, then Declan’s eyes sparkled.

“Were you really about to climb out that window?”

“Yeah.”

He shook his head. “I guess I shouldn’t expect any different.”

Something squeaked. The two stared at each other a moment.

“Was that—“

“Not me.”

They both looked. In the windowsill sat a fat orange cat.

“Shambles?” Declan said.

“This window is thirty feet from the ground,” Moira stated in shock. The cat blinked slowly, then lowered its smushed head. Across his back was a small letter.

Moira rubbed her head as Declan tore open the letter. It wasn’t unusual for a family to have a messenger cat, but Shambles always freaked her out a bit. Something about those eyes was too knowing. Moira was about to make a joke about it, till she saw Declan’s face. He’d paled so much she could see the freckles hidden by his tan.

“What is it?” She demanded.

“It’s...Cait,” he murmured. “She’s gotten worse.”

“Cait?” That was his youngest sister. Moira pictured a slight frame with Declan’s eyes. “What’s wrong?”

“She’s...actually, she’s the reason I was trying to find you,” Declan’s words sped up as he spoke. “Yesterday, she came down with a fever real bad, and I thought to come and get you for the tonic for it when it didn't break, but then Kai dragged me to the warehouse and now—and—I don’t know, what is wrong, and...”

“Hey,” Moira grabbed his shoulder and shook. Declan’s mouth opened and shut, staring off to the side. Guilt was etched in the lines of his forehead.
“Take me to her,” Moira said. “Now.”

Declan’s eyes went to the door a second before he wrapped his arm around Moira and they Apparated.

Tina came in holding a tray of cocoas, only to find an open window, where a fat orange cat perched.

“Where did they go?” Tina said. "And who's the cat?"

“Perhaps she turned into the cat,” Newt said. When Tina glared at him he added quickly, “There’s also a paper there, on the ground. Maybe they left a note.”

Tina set down the tray on the bed—the hot cocoa almost spilled—and dashed up the paper to read it, quickly.

Declan,

Cait’s gotten worse. Bring Moira or bring a priest.

J

“Who’s Cait?” Newt wondered at the same time Tina almost ripped the note into shreds. She looked out the window. The cat had vanished, somehow. Tina peered out. Though she saw no one, she imagined Declan and Moira arm in arm, skipping around the corner and laughing at Tina for thinking she’d made any sort of difference.

Well, two could play at this game.

Tina set one foot on the windowsill. It was only thirty feet, after all, and she could easily—

“Tina?”

She ignored the rush of footsteps coming from behind her but she couldn’t ignore the hands that closed over her shoulders.

“Tina!” Newt said, “What on earth are you doing?”

Tina struggled. “I need to go and get her!”

“Out the window?” Newt did not let go. “Tina, you’re over exhausted and it’s the middle of the night. I mean—what would Mrs. Esposito think?”

Tina still struggled but Newt wasn’t about to let her climb out the window. He just pulled as hard as he could without hurting her. It worked. As soon as her feet were on the ground, he snapped the window shut. There, he paused with his back to her. He was almost scared to look at her. He could see her in the reflection on the window, though, a little warped but it was clear she had her arms crossed, her one foot tapping away.

He turned in time to see her blow her bangs out of her eyes.

“Well,” Newt said. “I can see she’s gone.”

“Is there something wrong with this room?” Tina snapped.
Newt didn’t know how to respond at first. He thought it was a very nice room, after all.

“I don’t really know what you mean,” he said.

“Is there something wrong with the furniture? The quilts? Me bringing her cocoa? How about where I apologized?” Tina threw her hands in the air. “What exactly will it take for this girl to trust us?”

“Tina,” Newt stepped closer. Tina was looking very pale and her hair was sticking up from the wind, giving her a bit of a mad look. She wasn’t looking at him as she spun to go to the door.

“It’s fine,” Tina said. “She can’t have gone too far, even if she Apparated. We’ll just go to the her district and then—”

“Tina!” Newt finally grabbed her arm. Tina stopped, breathing fast, staring at the doorframe like she was about to rip it off the wall.

“Listen to me,” Newt said. “You’re...over tired. You need to rest.”

“My witness has escaped Mr. Scamander! I can’t just rest that off.”

“But you aren’t thinking straight! Merlin’s beard, Tina, you almost climbed out a window. What good will you be to anybody in that state of mind?”

“At least I’ll have something to report tomorrow other than ‘hey, I blew up a factory and lost my witness!’ I have people I gotta answer to, Newt, and me telling them that won’t exactly help.”

“Why don’t you tell them you almost died today?”

Newt hadn’t meant to say that but he didn’t want to take the words back, either, especially when Tina stilled. She tilted her head.

“Oh, Newt,” she murmured. “I wasn’t...”

“Thinking? I would say that’s obvious.”

The tension left her body and her eyes drifted shut. She took a deep breath. Deciding it was safe to, he let go of her arm. Tina continued into the dining room. Not sure what else to do, he followed. She sank into one of the dining room chairs and placed her head in her hands.

Now Newt was worried. He hadn’t expected his words to hurt her, he’d just wanted her to not run off again. He couldn’t bear the thought of her getting hurt if he could have stopped it. Now, though, he realized he couldn’t bear her hurting because of him either.

He moved around and sat in the chair next to her.

“I’m sorry,” he said, sounding formal to his own ears. “If I said something to upset you.”

“You said the right things.”

“But you made good points as well.”

Tina laughed. “It’s okay for you to be right, Newt.”

“Not when you cry.”

“I’m not crying.”
Newt didn’t respond to that. Tina rubbed her temples. There was a bit of silence for a moment, not exactly tense, not exactly calm either. Tina laid her hands on the table.

“I can’t just do nothing,” she said.

“I find that writing helps when I am having difficult thoughts,” Newt suggested. He remembered not that long ago, trying to sketch the Kyran to clear his thoughts. But then he’d just sketched Tina. He wasn’t about to suggest Tina sketch *himself* though for stress relief.

Tina smiled. “I like you’re thinking. I’ll start on my reports, detailing as much as I can. Like these,” she pulled out her journal from her coat and opened it to the pages of symbols she’d sketched. Newt was shocked to see how many she had managed to copy down.

“I still don’t recognize them,” Tina said. “And I wish we could have gotten a sample of that slime on the walls...or had a scene of crime in general.”

Tina rose and began to pace. “Declan said that Moira had ‘broken the Seal.’ Those words exactly.” Tina moved over and wrote down that phrase, then kept walking. “Then there’s this Gerald Declan person. What is his connection to Moira? Are they only friends?” She stopped, wrote down those questions, kept pacing. “Finally, the man in the warehouse that might be...be...” she looked at Newt, and Newt nodded. “Grindelwald,” Tina finished. “But, if that’s the case, then...we’ll have much larger problems, and reason for alarm, so we shouldn’t make that assumption yet. So, all we have is two kids who seem to know something we don’t, a magical anomaly that we can’t decipher, and someone who may or may not be Grindelwald.”

“And a dragon.”

Tina paused. “Really?”

"Maybe two."

Tina wrote it down, then continued to pace. Newt liked watching her mind rev, even in frustration. Tina wasn’t the type to have a cup of tea and let the ideas settle in. She kept muttering to herself, walking and noting, till the clock chimed eleven. It was then she stopped, and her brows drew together.

“It’s late, and Queenie's not back.”

Newt started. “Is that unusual?”

“Sunday isn’t typically a party night for her,” Tina looked at the clock, and her face grew tenser. “And she wouldn’t be at work or anything.“

“Can you contact her?”

“I mean,” Tina shook her head. “Not really.”

Tina sank into the chair and rubbed her forehead. She suddenly looked much older then Newt thought she should. Abruptly he rose and went to stand behind her.

She craned her head. She looked faintly amused.

“Yes?” she said.

“I’m going to make tea,” Newt announced. “For both of us.”
When she just stared at him, he nodded to himself and marched over to the stove. After a moment, Tina said,

“Make it strong. We might be up a while.”

Newt nodded. While he worked, Tina watched him. He only used magic to heat the water. The arranging of the tea, and the mugs, he did by hand. It was kind of charming and soothing to watch him. Watching his hands especially, the graceful movements of each finger. And he’d done that for her, without knowing that observing him work, smelling tea brewing, was just what she needed to calm down.

She really didn’t deserve him.

He glanced back and caught her look.

“What?” he asked.

Tina smiled. “I like watching you make tea.”

Newt barely contained his smile as he ducked his head. “Well, that’s not a compliment I’ve gotten before.”

Tina giggled. Newt brought the tea over and they sat in compatible working silence until Tina finally couldn’t keep her eyes open anymore. She considered playing up her exhaustion enough for Newt to carry her, but wouldn’t stoop to that melodrama. Still once she was by her bed side, she quickly swiveled and kissed his cheek. Newt stopped like she’d electrocuted him.

"Night," Tina said.

Newt stared at the ground a moment, red, and for a moment she thought he might kiss her back, but then he just turned and headed to the door. In the frame, he turned, and she could see the huge smile across his face.

"Good night, Tina," he said, then closed the door. His smile was the last thing she saw before going to sleep, and Tina was far too happy with that.

Newt stayed up a little past Tina, tending to his creatures. He didn’t really need much sleep, after all, and he’d missed seeing everyone. When he finally climbed out of the case, it was nearing three A.M.

And Queenie had just walked into the apartment.

Newt stared. Her hair was a mess, her lipstick and makeup smudged, and her dress was...well. A bit rummaged through.

Smirking, Queenie placed a finger to her lips, then went into the room she shared with Tina. She closed the door behind her.

Newt stood dumbfounded for a moment but, not knowing what else to do, went into his case to sleep. It could’ve all been a dream, or something. And it was something Tina should really handle.

Around the time Newt was making tea, Moira and Declan sprinted up a flight of rickety stairs inside a tenement house.

“What were her symptoms?” Moira demanded, half out of breath. She was still dizzy from
Apparating but was trying to think through it.

“Headache, sweats, fever,” Declan stepped over a man sleeping in the hall. Moira followed suit. “And she was delirious when she was awake. But she isn’t awake now.”

“Okay,” Moira pulled out her journal from her coat and started flipping through the tabs of symptoms. Finally, they reached the right door. Under the knob was a small etching of a falcon, impossible to see unless you were looking. Declan knocked on a door and waited.

Moira looked up. “Why don’t you just go in?”

Declan shook his head. “You know how she is.”

The door swung open and a tall, imposing woman filled the frame. On one wrist sat a ball full of needles, and she had thread ends all over her apron and dress. Her sharp, weather-beaten features scowled down on them.

“Gerald Brennan Declan, where have you been?” she demanded. “I sent you out hours ago! She could have died!”

Declan paled and nodded. “I know, Mum. But I got her.”

“I can see that,” his mother’s eyes narrowed on Moira. “You better be as good as they say you are, Moira.”

Moira just nodded. She’d always been a bit afraid of Declan’s mother. The kids called her Jumbo Armed Jude for a reason.

“Well come in before you let in a Bogart,” Jude said. They followed her in. Inside, the meager furnishings, the sink, even the piping were hung with dresses and coats and other finery, all being stitched by invisible hands. Jude waved her other hand, twiddling her fingers, and the clothes floated out of the way of one bed.

A small figure was swaddled in it. Moira took of her coat and pulled on some gloves as she neared. The girl seemed frailer then she remembered. Her face was that sweating pale of fever, and she was twitching in her sleep. Not good signs. Moira reached into her coat pocket and pulled out her satchel—ignored a harumph from Jude at that—and then from the satchel pulled out a sleeve of vials. Moira consulted her journal.

“So what took you so long?” Jude demanded of Declan.

“Falcon business,” Declan said.

Jude sighed. “How many times do I have to tell you Gerald? You need to get out from them.”

“Mum, we’ve been over this.”

Moira seized on the correct page. It was only flu, maybe, but if left alone too long and in such a weak frame it could easily escalate to something much worse. Her eyes darted from the girl—god, she looked so small, but she wouldn’t think of that—and grabbed one of her poultices. She cursed herself for coming so late. Guilt was useless now.

Moira turned her head. “Could I have a glass of water, ‘mam?”

“You may,” Jude said. She waved her hand and one of the glasses floated from the cupboard. It was
full of water before it reached Moira’s hands. Moira couldn’t help smiling a bit to herself, remembering Declan doing the same for her.

“What she smiling about?” Jude demanded. “Is something funny?”

“No. Don’t think ‘bout it.”

“She always was an odd one.”

Having mixed the medicine, Moira carefully wedged one of her arms under Cait. The girl’s sleep dress was covered in sweat and her eyes barely opened as she was lifted.

“Hi Cait,” Moira murmured. “Drink this, please.”

Cait didn’t argue, if she could. Moira had to open her mouth a little wider and pour slowly, so the girl wouldn’t choke, and about half way through drinking it Cait’s eyes opened fully and met Moira’s. Moira smiled.

“You’re going to be fine, okay? Just keep drinking.”

Cait didn’t respond but didn’t look away from her either. It was a bit unsettling. Or maybe it was just the silence that hovered behind Moira. It wasn’t the patients that were hardest to deal with anyway. It was everyone else.

When Cait had drunk everything and laid down, Moira laid her hand against Cait’s forehead, then relaxed her own eyes. The girl’s aura was frantic before, but slowly a blue haze wove through it, settling the activity. Healing.

Moira sighed. She heard Declan sink into one of the chairs behind her.

“She’s alright,” Declan said for Jude’s sake.

Moira rose. “I think she should be fine, now. I gave her this,” Moira turned, placed the rest of the medicine on the table. “I combined it with a stronger fever reducer, but you should just need the first medicine for now. And I can write out the exact recipe for you, if you want to make more. Some of the herbs will be a bit hard to find. It’s one part to one cup of water.”

“How much you want for it?” Jude asked.

Moira swallowed and considered. Normally, she didn’t give discounts. But she also had very few friends. And she’d put Declan through enough today. Plus, kids got to her.

“It’s on me,” Moira said. “For keeping you waiting so long.”

Jude scowled and if Moira wasn’t wrong, looked disappointed. “Girl, I’m not a fool and neither are you. So you’re goin’ to charge me for your hard work, you hear me? I can afford it.” Jude went over to her purse, pulled out a wallet. “You know how many people try to wheedle me out of payin’ for their mending? Like it’s simple work. It’s ‘cause I’m a woman, of course. If I had something else between my legs—"

“Mother.”

“—You can bet they would be payin’ me double. Idiots.“ Jude looked back. “So let’s do this again. How much?”

“Eight dollars, ‘mam.”
Jude grinned. “That’s a good girl.” She handed over the money. Moira took it with a quick thank you before tucking it into her bag. A glance at Declan revealed her friend was almost collapsed in embarrassment and it broke some of Moira’s nerves. After all, most people had a hard time shaking Declan.

As Moira wrote a few notes in her ledger, Jude approached her daughter’s bedside. Moira stopped scribbling to watch. With gentleness odd to her large size, Jude brushed Cait’s limp hair back from her forehead and kissed the girl’s nose. When Jude turned that gentleness was gone.

“She’ll be fine, then?” Jude asked gruffly.

“Yes ‘mam. If not so, you can find me again.”

“Or I’ll send my Gerald to find you, since he always seems to.”

Moira was blushing and quickly looked away, though she didn’t know why. Jude’s eyes darted from her eldest son to Moira. Suddenly, the woman grinned. It was kind of terrifying.

“Moira, dear, would you like to stay for some tea? I can put a pot on and we can all have a nice chat.”

“That’s very swell of you, Mum,” a scrape from Declan jumping out of his chair. “But I should probably walk Moira home now. It’s late.”

“It’s never too late for hospitality.”

At just the right moment, though, the front door swung open and an avalanche of voices and footsteps trouped inside. Moira turned. The kids moved in a stampede of dirty arms and bright eyes and chatter. She couldn’t remember all their names, so she just smiled awkwardly. Most of them didn’t seem to notice anyway. Except the second eldest, Roland. He saw Moira and scowled. “What she doin’ here?”

“She’s here for Cait, duh,” the eldest daughter said. Moira was pretty sure her name was Lily. Lily smiled at Moira. “Is Cait doin’ better?”

Moira just nodded. Two of the younger kids, seeing Declan, squealed in joy and jumped on whatever they could reach. Declan laughed and swung them around, pretending they were dragging him to the floor. Lilly drew to Cait’s side and proudly declared. “She’s alive!”

“Course she’s alive,” Jude scoffed, “Who said she wouldn’t be?”

“Well, Marta around the corner said...”

Moira smiled to herself as she quietly stepped around the scene, and towards the door. She’d almost made it when Declan caught her eye. He might have been arguing with Roland, but now he leaned down, said something to the kids clinging to his legs, and they instantly pounced on Roland instead. Jude was yelling at them to behave when Declan finally closed the door behind them.

Moira exhaled. “What’s it like to have so many around you?”

“Loud. At least you weren’t here while they were eating. That’s a mad affair.”

“I don’t think I’d mind.”

Declan sent Moira a sharp look but she didn’t return it. “Anyway, we gonna walk to my shop or
what? You’ve already Apparated enough for ten men today.”

“Walking’s fine with me.”

“Okay.”

They walked in a silence that was easy on Moira’s part. She always liked when the curing’s went well. Cait would probably be fine, in a day or two at least. If she’d been stronger in the first place a flu wouldn’t have gotten to her so much. Then again, when you worked so much and ate so little, it was hard not to get so sick. She saw it way too much. She’d seen kids dying way too much too. She preferred the noise of Declan’s apartment to the grave silence.

“Moira?”

“Hmm?”

“Thank you.”

Moira looked up. Declan stared ahead, smiling. “You were thinking about Cait, right?”

“I—I thought you couldn’t—“

“I wasn’t reading your mind or anythin’. Just figured.”

“Yeah. I’m glad she’ll be okay.” It took Moira a moment, but she added. ”Thank you, too. For...everything."

“You're welcome.” Declan stretched his arms over his head. “What a day, huh? I feel like I could sleep for the next month.”

“I might.”

“Where?”

“Where?” Moira repeated.

“Are you going to stay in your apartment? Or are you going to go back to Miss Goldstein’s?”

Moira almost slapped her head on something. Right, Miss Goldstein. She had been fine staying there, or had come around to the idea, but that was before she ran off. Was there a law against rudeness? Because Tina would probably arrest her next time she saw Moira just because.

Damn it. Right when she could have made a somewhat favorable impression...but screw that too. She saved Cait from getting sicker, and that was more important.

They climbed the fire escape instead of going inside the building. Still, it was quite a few steps. Declan was out of breath by the time he reached the top but Moira couldn’t stop moving forward. Not when she saw the familiar windows, the smoke already pouring out of the chimney. Her shoulders were dropping already, her stress fading away. At least here, she knew what she was doing.

She pulled the flap back—and almost tripped over Kai.

“Kai?” she said.

Kai was on the floor, but lying on top of something. She crouched down and carefully moved Kai’s
wing. It was Peter, fast asleep. He hadn’t taken one of the blankets, and even with Kai, he was shivering like crazy.

Moira shook him. “Oi, Peter!”

Peter’s eyes slowly opened. “m-m-Moira?”

“How many times do I have to tell you?” Moira tried really hard not to yell. “If I’m not here, you can’t stay here! It’s too cold. You’ll freeze to death!”

“No one freezes to death,” Peter muttered. Moira just shooed him further inside, placing him under her plant shelf.


Kai did so eagerly, wrapping himself around Peter’s neck, and Peter squealed from surprise. But once Kai started purring Peter calmed down. Moira was wrapping a blanket around him, having drawn some Marks to make the blanket self warm, when Declan pulled back the door.

He blinked at Peter. “Who are you?”

“Who are you?” Peter snapped. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m Declan,” Declan replied, evidently at a loss as to how to respond otherwise. Moira covered her smile. She rolled her wrist, and instantly, her small cauldron began to bubble, and the mortar and pedestal started working. Peter and Declan watched in barely concealed wonder as she twisted her fingers, and herbs floated down from above, shredding midair and then flowing into the cauldron.

“It’s really pretty to watch her,” Peter murmured. Declan would have agreed but knew Moira wouldn’t like him to. Judging by her half-glare, it was a good decision on his part.

“Wait a minute, you’re Declan, aren’t you!” Peter said. His eyes darted over Declan’s frame. “You are a big guy.”

Declan just stared at him, but Peter didn't need much prompting to continue. “Yes, when I met Moira, I told her to call me Declan, but she said she already had a friend named that. So she said she’d call me little Declan, but I told her that there wasn’t anything small about me.” Peter puffed out his chest, or best he could with Kai and a blanket wrapped around him. Kai chattered and licked Peter's cheek. Declan smiled.

“Sure, whatever you say, big man.”

Peter’s eyes widened and sparkled like Declan had just handed him candy for the whole month. “Really? You think so?”

Declan sat down next to Peter. Peter took that as an invitation to tell Declan everything that had happened to him that day, while Moira worked. Some of her plants were a little worse for wears. A few zaps of magic and they were fine. Thanks to the Spirit Seal, she had enough excess magic to probably grow an entire forest and not get sick. Her apartment in the building probably did look like a forest at this point. But she'd worry about that way later.

As the hours darkened the workshop grew warmer and Declan had created some soft lights to float around overhead. They flickered like fire, making the herbs cast dancing shadows over the walls. Moira was pretty sure Peter hadn’t stopped talking since Declan came in. Judging by Declan’s worn (though still amused) expression, she was probably right. Finally, though, Peter’s eyes began to drift
closed, and he curled up to the side. Kai jumped up onto his perch—it was made from rope and a chair leg so it swung a little under his weight—and then gave Moira an expectant squawk.

“Yeah, yeah,” Moira reached under the counter for the sack of his feed. She measured it out in a metal bowl, which she then attached to his stand. He was already eating out of it before she secured it.

Once Kai was eating Moira realized how starving she was.

“Sandwich?”

Moira turned. Declan was tucked under her other work shelf, his head cocked to the side so it wouldn’t bang against the frame. He smiled up at her, with his hair half smashed in his eyes, and a sandwich in his hand.

Moira’s heart flipped. *Shit.*

She just nodded and took the sandwich and sat across from him. He stretched out his legs and they easily touched the other wall, close to her side. Moira mirrored him and tried to calm down whatever shit her heart was just pulling a few seconds ago. It was probably another fluke from the Spirit Seal.

“Mum made the sandwich for me,” Declan said, misreading her quiet. “But I ate at Miss Goldstein’s.”

Moira almost choked on her first bite, not from the taste, but from the name. Now that she’d worked a little, she felt a bit calmer to talk about the Goldstein situation.

“I think it’s best if I don’t go back,” Moira said. Declan raised one of his eyebrows and she kept talking. “I’ll just lay low here for a week. After all, I have enough tonics for a week, and my deliveries are caught up. There’s no reason I should have to move around much at all, ‘less there’s an emergency.”

“Or,” Declan said. “You could go back and apologize.”

Moira glared and Declan shrugged. “Anyway. I want to know about this Spirit Seal.”

The food suddenly tasted like ash in Moira’s mouth. She swallowed. “What do you want to know? You already know some.”

“I know folklore and whatever you told me that night,” Declan’s eyes darkened. “But if there’s more, and it’s Markus’ doing, I think I have a right to know.”

Moira gave him a long look. She no longer asked about what Declan did for the Falcons. It was an understood unspoken between them. The last time she had, he hadn’t talked to her for three weeks.

“Fine,” Moira was already sitting under her shelf, so she moved Kai’s sack of feed over. Under it was a rusted metal box. She unlatched it. Inside was a single, leather bound book. The pages were disintegrating, but she still stared at it like it would bite her. It had no title.

She picked it up and opened it. It was entirely hand written in Gaeilge, yet the ink had never faded.

“My mum gave me this book as soon as I realized what I was,” Moira said. “It’s been passed down for generations in my family. It’s not the only of its kind, but there are very few.”

Declan’s expression was serious, almost too much so. It made her start to sweat. She looked away
and handed him the book.

“The page for the Seals is marked,” Moira said.

He flipped to it and read. Moira pulled her knees into her chest and, looking for anything to calm herself, watched Peter sleep. But her eyes kept drifting to Declan. Occasionally, his eyebrows lifted, or he grimaced, but it seemed like forever where he wouldn’t look at her.

She kept waiting for him to throw the book at her and storm out.

His eyes finally lifted. “This is what Markus used to create that thing in the warehouse.”

“I think so.”

Moira waited as Declan processed it. Slowly, horror dawned on his expression. “But, this spell requires...a lot of death.”


“How could he—why would he—” Declan shook his head and looked back down at the book. “It also requires a bunch of other creepy shit. I don’t even know where you’d buy most of it. And the whole process would take up to a month to take effect and why? What’s the point?” His hands tightened on the book and Moira almost felt the need to snatch it away, like his grip would crush it. “What is Markus’ plan with all this?”

Moira reached out and tried to pull the book away. For a moment, he wouldn’t let her. Her heart skipped. Then, his hands relaxed. She took the book back.

The silence fell between them this time. Moira set the book to the side. She felt the need to wash her hands afterwards. She could also feel Declan’s eyes burning her, and wished he would speak his thoughts. But he waited till she looked at him before he asked,

“What is the purpose of a Spirit Seal?”

Moira rubbed her temples and stared at the ceiling. Suddenly, the shadows seemed to be contorting, not dancing. “I’m not entirely sure. The process, though, I can understand. Basically, you want to create a well of power for your own disposal, power that an individual wizard could never dream of. But you steal that power from others. That’s what taints it. When you kill people—or rather, even, when people die...” Moira stopped though and stared at the floor. She felt nauseous. Her fingers curled up over her leggings. From his perch, Kai looked up from his food and gave a perplexed chirp.

“Moira,” Declan’s voice was soft. “Keep talking.”

But Moira couldn't. It was too painful. And deeper down, she was scared of how he would react when she told him the whole truth. So when Moira didn't continue, Declan sighed. “Can I have the book back?”

“What?” Moira looked up. "Why?"

“Just hand it over.”

Moira did as he asked humoring him despite herself. He flipped it back open to the proper page for Seals, and then promptly began to read.
“The purpose of a Spirit Seal is to create a well of Dark Magic. If construed by the proper witch or wizard, it could even provide enough magic to give eternal life...Just what we need,” he interrupted the text, startling Moira. “A Markus that will live forever.”

Moira’s lips quirked. Declan kept reading. “The process requires one to harvest at least fifty souls. —Harvest, like it’s the fruit in autumn. Who wrote this? —Their power, once trapped by the spell, will never die, and never grow less powerful. However, beware. A Spirit Seal is incredibly unstable if not maintained by a witch or wizard who can protect his or her own souls’ from the Seals influence. If incautious, the Seal will drain your own power and soul from your body, much as a Dementor would. Well,” Declan looked up, his expression blank. “That sounds utterly terrifying.”

Moira barked out a laugh because, when read aloud, it sounded almost ridiculous. And it wasn’t that she was less afraid but somehow she felt...better.

Declan set the book aside. Then he leaned his head against the wall. “So what do you think Markus wants it for?”

“You’d be better at answering that then me.”

Declan didn’t respond, rubbing the back of his neck. They both fell into thoughtful silence for a few minutes. Moira fiddled with the threads on her coat. Kai had fallen asleep on his perch, and she suddenly longed to be asleep. To put all this out of her head, and remember when her biggest worry was delivering her products on time.

“We have to tell someone,” Declan finally said.

“Tell? Tell who? That book right there is the only one I know of that talks anything about this magic, and it’s hand written. Not something MACUSA would take seriously.”

“Then use your personal experience!” Declan sat up. “That has to count for something.”

“It’ll count against me, you mean, when they throw me in prison.”

“But if Markus creates another Seal—“

“He can’t.”

“Of course he...wait. Can’t? Why can’t he?”

We were missing one key ingredient. “He’s missing something from the recipe. And I am pretty sure he will never find it.”

“How can you be sure? That’s not something I’d leave to chance.”

Moira held his gaze, trying to communicate what she was thinking. Declan tried for a minute before narrowing his eyes.

“You know I can’t read your mind.”

“The book said,” Moira spoke slowly, weighing each word, “That to control a Seal, you would need someone resistant to spirit energy. Someone who can manipulate it. Tell me, do you know anyone that can do that?”

Now Declan’s eyes widened. His lips shook and he looked down, took a deep breath, before suddenly moving forward. Moira shrunk back. He stopped just short of invading her space.
“You need to get out of the city,” he said. “Now. I’ll help you.”

“I’m not running.”

“Moira—“

“I ran before. Not again. Markus doesn’t know where the final ingredient is, and I’m going to keep it that way.”

“What happened to lying low?”

Moira sighed. “I think I’ve come to realize that blending in really isn’t my specialty.”

Chapter End Notes

PHEW! feel better? maybe? I hope so :) Also I personally apologize now for any typos. Chapters this long always trip me up. But anyway, thank you so so SO much for reading and see you next time! :D

PS: please comment with questions, suggestions, recipes, etc....
Newt pitched up in bed. Sweat plastered his shirt to his chest. His breath felt cold in his lungs.

“Not there,” he said to himself. “Not...there.”

**But where am I?** He couldn’t hear his creatures sleeping. The Bowtruckles chattered while they slept. Sometimes, Dougal snored. Especially when he slept next to Newt.

Overhead was a normal ceiling, though, not a spell created night sky. Newt shook his head. Of course. He was in Tina and Queenie’s guest room. That revelation didn’t slow his heart, and with a groan Newt threw off the sheets completely and leaned over the side of the bed, placing his elbows on his knees and running his hands through his hair.

He hadn’t had a nightmare that bad in months. Had he screamed? Did he wake the girls up? Newt listened. No movement. Relief came quick at that, followed with the need to move.

But walking, pacing, only made him think of Tina. Since it distracted from his nightmares, he let himself. He’d wanted to kiss her when she had said good night. He’d thought about it. But she had been so tired, about to go to sleep, and he didn’t want to bother her. Or he was worried she’d laugh at him, just like Leta—

But that wasn’t the real reason, was it?

When he’d been in, well, his only relationship, with Leta...it taught him not to instigate intimacy. That was it. Leta liked to be held or kissed when she liked to be the one holding or kissing. But if he had ever tried to make the first move, she’d either shoved him away, disgusted, or laughed at him.

His hands fisted by his sides and he wished it was with rage. The blush spreading across his cheeks said otherwise. He didn’t want Tina to laugh at him. And of course, Tina and Leta were completely different women, but when your previous evidence said something would happen, and he had no other evidence to go off of...

Maybe he should ask someone else. But who? His next thought was Jacob and a fissure of pain in his chest signalled that was probably not a good idea. Besides, Jacob didn’t know him anymore. What good would it be?

The pain in his chest had warmed, though, turning into something like hope at the idea. He had the whole day. He could go and see Jacob, perhaps, and they could have a...chat, or something. Did men chat? That was something Theseus did with his friends. And come to think of it, they often talked about women. Women without names or faces. Hypotheticals. He could talk to Jacob in hypotheticals! That was it.

Newt walked over towards the wash stand and threw water onto his face. The mirror was in front of
the table was impossible to ignore. His face was paler then normal and his hair stuck up like a novice Occamy nest. Newt tilted his head from side to side. There was a scar on his neck that he couldn’t remember where it came from.

_I was laying on the tracks and I couldn’t move and he was smiling and hexing and smiling and Creedence was crying and then Tina, I have to save Tina and Creedence, but there was only—_

Newt leaned on the table and tried to breathe. On the third attempt, he succeeded. Still moments from the dream kept slipping in between his thoughts, between his breaths. Ferdi smiling. Grindelwald smiling. Pain, on both sides, different but so acute.

Newt had never told anyone about it, really. How Grindelwald had smiled as he tortured him on the train tracks, and sometimes that smile still showed up when Newt’s eyelids closed. He’d seen that smile on Ferdi and hadn’t even thought before he drew his own wand.


Newt shoved back from the table. He needed tasks. That would soothe more than muttering to himself in the dark. Quickly, he changed into another pair of pajamas—not having sweaty fabric against his skin helped a little—and then flipped open the case. Maybe he’d finish sleeping in the case, for the night. Or he could just check on everyone.

He was too busy descending to see the light flicker on in the hallway.

Tina had been waking every hour since she closed her eyes. She could never remember her dreams when she woke. On the second waking, she’d looked over to see Queenie sleeping soundly in the bed across from her’s. Tina had been too sleepy to feel surprise. That could wait for tomorrow. But on the next waking, Tina heard more movement through the wall.

Their walls were thin, after all. So a person even muttering to themselves wasn’t hard to hear. And it had to be Newt’s voice. Too low to be otherwise. Tina kept still, listening. The floor was creaking, as if he was pacing. Tina felt worried. Pacing at—check the clock—four am was never a good sign.

She threw off the sheets and grabbed her dressing robe, throwing them over her pajamas. She wore her simple boyish set, cotton with small blue flowers, but it was freezing in the apartment without the fire. Her slippers padded softly across the hardwood. Unlike Newt, she knew how to avoid creaky floorboards.

She went around the corner, about to say his name, but when she came in she saw his bed empty. Instantly, her brain started collecting details. It was the Auror reaction. The window was shut. He’d thrown one set of bed clothes on the bed (why? It’s not like he could’ve gotten hot). The sheets looked twisted all to hell.

Then, the most important detail. The case sitting right next to the bed. She smiled to herself in relief. Not that she’d expected him to run off, of course...

When she had descended into the case, the little room looked a bit messier then the last time she’d been in. It was also darker. And quieter. Did the creatures sleep at the same time the humans did? Surely some of them were nocturnal.

Carefully, Tina stepped out of the small building. She’d never been inside by herself before. It was a smidge intimidating. The “sky” was dark above her. The Nundu was asleep on top of her rock. The enclosures sparkled with stars, while over head the Grindylows drifted lazily. Tina swallowed. She
was worried about knocking something over. Or what if she stepped on someone? She didn’t want to think anything would attack her, but it also was her intruding into their house—

A flicker, then Dougal stood in front of her. Tina almost squeaked. Dougal blinked up at her before lumbering off.

“Great timing,” she muttered, before following. She went past the Kyran enclosure. The Kyrans were huddled together under the tree, curled up in a way that oddly reminded her of cats.

It only took a few steps for her to hear his voice. He was singing to himself, in a voice smooth if a little off key. She hesitated. Watching him without him knowing was quickly becoming a pastime.

He was sitting on rock in his pajamas and half laced boots. His robe had slipped off one shoulder, but when he tilted his body a little, she saw him cradling a small, orange fluff. It made little mewing noises occasionally. As she watched, it yawned and curled deeper into Newt’s arms, and Newt smiled like someone had just handed him a million dollars.

Tina felt a strange pang in her chest. He was holding whatever it was like a small child. Like it was the easiest thing in the world.

*God, Goldstein, you only just kissed. Get a handle on yourself.*

Newt finally seemed to sense her and turned. He started.

“Tina,” he said.

“I’m sorry,” Tina found herself saying. “I didn’t mean to—I just heard you movin’ around, and I thought—“

“No, it’s fine.” Newt rose, careful but swift, and set the creature down in a small box like enclosure. Tina stepped a little closer, trying to see in, but then Newt was in front of her. He hadn’t straightened his robe, and his hair was sleep mussed. Tina had the sudden desire to run her hand through it.

“She’s a Kneazle, in case you were wondering,” Newt said. “I actually found her on the ship on the way here, abandoned by her parents perhaps. She doesn’t need to be fed by hand anymore, but I still like to hold her till she sleeps.”

Tina stared. Normally, Newt was adorable when he talked about these things. But right now Newt moved as if he was going to shove his hands in his pockets even though his robe didn’t have pockets. He wasn’t meeting her gaze either. Was he paler than usual?

“I’m sorry if I woke you,” Newt said. “I didn’t mean to.”

“It’s alright,” Tina said.

They stood in place for a second. The quiet was oddly tense and Tina didn’t know why.

“Is something wrong?” Tina asked.

“No, not really. Not—no. We could head back upstairs, if you like. I don’t even want to think of what time it is.“

“Wait,” Tina stepped in front of him. Her eyes sought his. “If you wanna stay down here, you can. I mean you could sleep in your case if that makes you more comfortable.”

“It’s not that. We should just go upstairs.”
“You should just tell me what’s wrong.”

Newt tensed. Then he spun away. “Actually, I just remembered there was something I have to do. Don’t mind me.”

Tina followed him. For some reason, she was starting to get angry. It was like he was keeping something from her. He’d told her what was wrong on the train, right? When he was worried about Jacob. His feelings didn’t seem the same now, though. It was almost like he was angry too.

“Is there something we need to talk about?” Tina said.

“No.”

“Newt...”

“Tina,” Newt looked back. His gaze was flat. “Just don’t worry about it, okay? I’m fine now and that’s what matters.”

“No, you’re not. Is this about...what happened with Moira?”

Newt tensed. Tina drew a few steps forward. “Is it about what happened, in the warehouse? Because I keep thinking about it. And I can’t...I can’t sleep.”

Newt looked up to the starred sky. The muscles in his neck were so tense his veins stuck out. Tina kept going, drawing closer. “I can’t sleep because when I was trapped, there, I could see you. I could see you—“Dying”—suffering, and could do nothing. It scared me. I was having nightmares. Were you, too?”

She was right behind him then. So when he turned, she could peer up under his hair to see his eyes.

“That’s it, isn’t it?” Tina whispered. “It’s not something to be ashamed of, Newt.”

“Many would disagree with that.”

“Not smart people. Not me.”

Newt looked to the side and bit his lip. Then he ran his hand over his mouth and stared at the ground.

“Newt,” Tina prompted softly.

“I couldn’t sleep. I was having...nightmares.”

“About...?”

Newt shifted his weight. “About being in the warehouse. But also, about that night where Creedence...where Creedence, and Grindelwald...” he didn’t continue in that vein, and she didn’t push. “I have dreams about it. It used to be every night. Not as much, now.”

“Oh Newt—“ But when she reached out, he drew back from her touch. Tina refused to let that sting. “You never mentioned that in your letters.”

“I didn’t think it necessarily important.”

“Of course it’s important, Newt!”

Newt didn’t respond.
“Why didn’t you tell me about them, Newt? I could’ve...”

“You could’ve what, Tina?” he snapped. “Step across the pond and make me a cup of cocoa? There was nothing you could do. I didn’t think it was necessary for you to know because it didn’t concern you.”

Tina recoiled. His eyes blazed a second before he turned away. He moved a few feet off. Stopped. Tina swallowed hard. When a minute of silence passed between them, and Newt still wouldn’t look at her, Tina finally turned around and headed for the stairs.

She was half up the ladder when Newt grabbed her wrist.

“Wait,” he said.

She looked down on him but he seemed to have frozen, like he didn’t know how he got into the shed in the first place. Tina searched what she could see of his expression, but his hair had fallen over his eyes, and though his mouth was visible it was just set in a hard line.

It was hard to think she’d kissed him only...what, yesterday? Two days ago now? It felt ages ago.

“I’m going back to sleep,” Tina said. “And we can talk in the morning?”

His grip tightened on her hand. “I can...I can explain. If you’ll wait, please?”

“How long? The next few minutes? Or a few days?” Tina sighed. “Newt, it’s okay if you don’t want to talk about...I don’t know. I shouldn’t have pushed you.”

“I shouldn’t have snapped. Please,” Newt finally lifted his eyes. “Don’t leave me right now, Tina.”

Where is all this coming from? Tina wondered, staring at his expression of pain and desperation. He’d seemed perfectly calm, even after they’d carried Moira back to her apartment. While Declan had explained what he could. While she’d made dinner.

Then, come to think of it, he hadn’t really eaten. Hadn’t talked much, either. And she’d been too busy dwelling on the case to think...he’d just comforted her, the whole time. Had she ever tried to comfort him?

No. Because he hadn’t asked.

He was asking now.

So Tina sank down onto the ladder step. She readjusted her hand so it clasped in his. Newt kept his eyes on their joined hands.

“So do you want to talk?” Tina asked quietly.

Newt didn’t respond. He rotated their grip, so her hand was on top, and his other finger tips traced the back of her hand. It gave her goosebumps.

“When I was in Ukraine, during the Great War,” Newt started. “A few of the soldiers, that came to work with us, they would...they would often wake screaming. Or they’d hear the dragons roar, or their fire explode, and they would drop to the ground and start yelling. Some developed tremors, or couldn’t even speak. I thought it was just being in the war zone. I think they call it shell shock, now. But at the time we didn’t know what it was. And I thought, well, they must have seen something terrible to feel that way. It all felt distant. Then Theseus came home.”
Newt stopped speaking. Tina waited. Newt inhaled and continued. “He’s a war hero, you know, but no one knows that for the first two weeks he was home, he couldn’t get out of bed. He couldn’t speak to us. And we had to be very careful about slamming doors, or calling out to each other, because he wouldn’t take it well. When he did come out, he was more himself, but then sometimes he would just...go away. His temper was worse too. Even now, sometimes, he starts...and our mother, she’d often come to me and ask me what to do, how to help him, because Theseus was scaring her. It was like he wasn’t my brother, sometimes, and—“

Tears filled Newt’s eyes and he lowered his head. Tina tried to draw back her hand, so he could cover his face, but it was like his grip had turned into a vise. Like holding her was the only thing keeping him from collapsing.

Newt didn’t continue speaking for a few minutes. Tina’s heart was pounding. She could feel her pulse against his hands.

“I was scared,” Newt said. “About telling you the...dreams, I was having, because I thought they would scare you away.”

“Never,” Tina stated. “I would never be scared of that, Newt. Look at me.” When he didn’t, she kept going. “I’m right here, Newt. Still. And I’m not going anywhere.” She gripped his shoulder. “It would take a lot more than that to scare me away, trust me.”

“I know,” his lips whispered against their hands. “I needed to hear that, though.” His shoulders dropped and he exhaled. “I needed to hear that.”

Tina smiled. “I’ll say it again, if you want.”

“No, that’s alright.”

It was all one quick movement. She was staring down at his head, his hands clasped around her’s, and then he was standing, his arms on either side of her head on the ladder, bowing down over her. His eyes seared. Tina’s breath stopped.

“I need you,” he said. “Can I kiss you, please?”

Tina had barely nodded before his mouth covered her’s. Now she felt his desperation, his pain, and she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and held him tight enough that he probably couldn’t breathe. Not that she could, either. His lips were crushing against her’s and when his tongue slipped between her lips and ran along the roof of her mouth, Tina moaned before she could stop herself. It was like he was trying to consume all of her at once.

Like he was trying to prove to himself that she was real.

Somehow, his hands had gotten under her robe. She could feel the heat of them through her pajamas, pressing into her lower back, then—she gasped—his hands were against her bare skin. His fingertips drifted up her spine and she groaned again, pressing even closer to him.

At her sound his hand stilled. Then he pulled away, breathing hard. They stared at each other. For Tina, it was a bit like looking at a stranger, yet someone she knew by heart. She moved forward and rested her forehead against his. He smiled.

“Thank you for listening.”

“If that’s how you thank me,” Tina said. “Then I’ll be doing a lot more for you from now on.”
Newt’s blush spread down his neck now and he shook his head. “Don’t flatter me, Tina. Besides, it’s probably better for us to sleep.”

Tina drew back an inch. “Is that so?”

Newt blinked and looked confused. But Tina also liked seeing him blush too much to let it go. Tina moved closer to him, grinning. “Really, Mr. Scamander? You kiss me like that and then think you can just walk off?”

“Oh,” Newt swallowed and stepped back. “I mean...well.”

Tina was off the ladder and now he was the one back against the counter. Tina moved close enough that she could feel his body trembling against her’s, and the power that she could do that to him thrilled her. It made her knees weak. She braced her hands on either side of him.

They shared breath.

“Do you feel like sleeping, Mr. Scamander?” Tina said. “Because I don’t.”

Newt seemed past forming speech. Tina ran her fingertip around his jaw, clenched so tight it was like touching steel, then down his neck. When she traced the vein, there, he inhaled through his mouth. She smiled. “Because we could always not sleep, Newt.”

“What...” Newt’s voice was shaking, but he did meet her gaze. It sent a thrum to her core. “Did you have...in mind, Miss Goldstein?”

“Well,” Tina’s hand was slowly tracing down his neck, over the part of his chest exposed by his sleep shirt. She stopped at the first closed button. “You made me moan pretty loudly.”

Newt just nodded.

“And I wonder, what could I do to make you sound like that.”

Newt made a helpless noise, then, but suddenly his hands flew up and clasped over her wrists. Tina started.

His eyes were pressed shut.

“Newt?” Tina said.

“Not right now, Tina,” Newt murmured.

Tina felt like she’d been slapped. Blush spread like wildfire over her face. She went to move back, but he wouldn’t let her. His eyes opened.

“It’s not that I don’t want you,” Newt said. “I think I made that perfectly obvious. But there are...other things, I want to do with you, before we get to that point.”

“Like what?” Tina asked. She actually felt bewildered.

His lips quirked. “Well, dinner for one. Perhaps a show. Something other than a near death experience. Something quite ordinary.”

“When have we ever been ordinary?” Tina wondered aloud. Her chest felt like it was lifting, though, like helium had replaced her oxygen and she rose on her toes to kiss his forehead. “But that does sound lovely. Let’s try that, first.”
“Okay.”
Chapter Summary

During which Newt goes to Jacob for help and gets more help then he expected.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When Newt woke up, he was momentarily confused. Then he remembered last night.

All of it.

Quickly rolling over, he resisted the urge to bury his face in his pillow. On one level, he was very proud of his sexual self control. On the other hand, he wanted to punch himself in the head. On one hand, he was glad he told Tina about his troubles sleeping at night. On the other hand, he had little idea how to proceed with it.

Seeking some sort of distraction, his eyes drifted to the nightstand. A folded note laid there. He snatched it up and opened it. The scrawling print was as familiar to him as his own. It read,

Morning sleeping beauty,

Off to work, should be back around five. Hopefully, I’ll find something that’ll tell us what this “seal” thing is. If you can, figure out what kind of dragons we might dealing with.

There’s plenty of food in the kitchen, do help yourself.

I’ll see you soon,

And then it looked like she’d written a few things, scribbled them out, then just signed her name.

He scratched his forehead, staring at the scribbles Tina had tried to erase. He had an idea what she might have written. He’d done the same in his later letters to her. Writing "Love" then crossing it out to replace with "Sincerely" or what have you.

He had always waited. He knew he had to. With relationships, there was a concept of speed, of that he was sure. Not too fast or too slow. However, without a physical measuring instrument--but now he was just being ridiculous.

He groaned to himself and threw the covers back. The case was by his feet. He flipped it open and descended inside, still in his pajamas. He snagged his robe before heading out of the shed. The Nundu was doing its morning cry, and he could hear the chatter of the Bowtruckles most likely deciding who Newt would feed first. Pickett jumped into his pocket almost instantly, and after a few moments proceeded to hug Newt as much as he could.

“Nothing to worry about,” Newt said. “No need for distress, Pickett.”

Pickett shook his head and began to pet Newt's hand like one would a startled cat. Newt smiled despite himself. He continued his care. Even the Mooncalves seemed to sense something was off,
huddling closer to him than usual.

"Honestly, I'm alright," Newt said to them. "Mummy's just having some romantic issues, is all."

He made his way past what was once the Thunderbird closure, where the Kyrans now lived. He kept their feed in a locked container nearby. However, when he arrived, the latch was open and the bin was completely empty save for some scraps of burlap.

Newt blinked. *Impossible.* That was a two ton padlock. He spun and glared around. Wisely, the Kyrans were hiding. Clever little buggers. If he could just see them, he could probably pick the culprit.

Next, he came to the somewhat disturbing conclusion that without food, he had no idea how to summon them.

What had Moira done for her's? Had he ever seen her summon Kai? He thought it over, tapping his fingers on the bin. Come to think of it, the Kyran just seemed to follow her without any cues. And once Kai was with her she normally said—he winced, realizing her commands were always *run* or *hide*.

He and Tina really hadn't made the best impression.

But what he'd give for such a relationship with one of his Kyrans. The ability to communicate, to understand their social cues. The information he could collect...well, Moira had whistled once, hadn't she? And he'd occasionally heard the Kyrans whistle to each other.

Newt tried whistling. Nothing. He varied the note pattern a few times, although if he was being honest with himself, he was a bit tone deaf. And when none of the them came, he finally just sighed and turned to collect the feed.

The three Kyrans stood right behind him.

Newt jumped and cursed. They just blinked slowly at him. Victoria, in the center, tilted her head and made a soft hissing noise, not threatening based on her...well, expression. She ruffled her feathers and chattered in a way that sounded suspiciously mocking.

"Which one of you broke the lock?" Newt asked. The Kyrans shuffled. "While I appreciate the new information about your strengths, I would have prefered you didn't eat all the feed. Now I have to buy a new lock and figure out how I'm supposed to feed you."

Actually, that was a serious concern. He'd timed his shipments of their food precisely. International shipments of feed for magical creatures wasn't easy to manage legally and he'd promised himself not to do as many illegal things this time.

Victoria made a few clicking noises, then promptly turned to peck the green Kyran, Oliver, on the head. Oliver fluttered his wings and squawked in distress, maybe appeal, to the scarlet Kyran. Carmen rolled her head and flew off, leaving Oliver alone. Having to accept his fate, Oliver lowered his head and Victoria started pecking on his skull and down his neck. She hissed sometimes between pecks.

If Newt wasn't wrong, this was a sort of public shaming.

"Okay, that's enough," Newt said. He was shocked when Victoria stopped. Oliver quickly waddled off.
Holding Victoria’s gaze, Newt sank down to the ground. Victoria chirped. Newt moved an inch closer, tilting his head and rolling his tongue. Victoria didn’t move, watching him. Carefully, Newt stretched out his hand. He left it a few inches from her, not too close to her face. His heart was speeding up now as he waited for her reaction. If Tina had been here, she’d probably yell at him for not wearing protective gloves, or for moving too close.

“But you won’t hurt me,” Newt murmured. “Will you, Victoria?”

Victoria made a rolling sound and crept forward an inch to regard his hand. He held his breath.

She licked his fingers.

Newt restrained his gasp.

That’s all it took. Victoria shook her head, ruffled her feathers, then flew off.

Newt sat stunned. In all his literature, even with the ancients, Kyrans did not willingly touch other human beings. In fact, Kyrans typically did not engage in much physical contact amongst themselves. Licking was unheard of.

*But you wouldn’t have thought that possible, till you met Moira.*

Back in his shed, he wrote down the entire Kyran encounter. His excitement made his handwriting almost illegible. He’d recopy the notes later. Right now, he had to focus on something a bit more known yet dangerous.

*Dragons.*

Unfortunately, he’d only just broken into his field notes when his stomach growled. Newt debated. He could eat later, after he wrote the notes. But then his stomach growled again and he sighed. After checking through the kitchen and putting together a sandwich something else caught his eye. A light pink wrapper stuck out of the trashcan.

Drawing closer, he saw the curling script of Jacob’s bakery scrawled across the top.

Right, Jacob. He had planned to go and visit. Now that his romantic troubles were over...Newt blushed a bit...actually, were his troubles over? And as he sat there thinking, about a million questions popped into his head. Where did people eat in New York? Was buying flowers a custom in America? How did one inquire into their partner’s allergies without hurting the “mood”? How did one establish that “mood” anyway?

Perhaps, Newt concluded, seeing Jacob wouldn’t be a bad idea after all.

He debated long about Apparating versus taking the subway. He didn't really like the subway even if it was safer and a more American experience. Not to mention what if Apparated into a crowd of Muggles? Then Tina would have more problems.

In the end, he took the subway. It gave him time to study his notes at least. Though it didn't take long for that to stall as well.

What it really came down to would be finding someone who had found prints, or being able to trace the scorch marks. From his notes that he managed to take from the warehouse, the scorches were most likely from a large to medium scale European dragon, but that would be impossible to keep safely in New York. They would need a cavern.
Newt put his pen in his mouth, thinking. Did New York have such systems? Could the city be built on top of a cavern system--

"Excuse me?"

Newt looked up. A young woman in a lavender coat stood in front of him. Her eyes were a sparkling blue and her hair was perfectly coiled as she smiled at him. "Excuse me, but are you Mr. Scamander?"

He tried to respond and dropped his pen, having forgotten it was in his mouth. Blushing as red as a cardinal he stooped down to pick it up--and found she had done the same, and now her face was right next to his.

"You are Mr. Scamanader, then?" the woman said.

Newt sat up abruptly. "I'm sorry, do I know you?"

"Oh, no," she laughed. "I guess you aren't used to having people asking for your signature?"

"Erm, well, yes."

She laughed again. "Is that always how you say yes? I didn't know it took three words."

Newt didn't reply. The woman didn't seem to mind. She reached into her bag and pulled out a crisp book.

"Would you mind signing my copy?" she said. "I've enjoyed reading it so much. Here, I'll sit next to you while you do it."

He hadn't remembered inviting her to do so but he also had no idea how to say no politely. By the time he'd realized it she was sitting beside him. Her arm was pressed flat against his, even though she had plenty of room.

"Yes, well," Newt opened the copy and kept his body very still and straight. "Would you mind telling me who to make it out to?"

"May. May Lewis." Suddenly, her voice was close to his ear. Breathy, low. "Do you need me to spell it? I don't mind."

"No! No. Uh," Newt suddenly thought of Tina, her smile, and at the same time realized he was a bit trapped between the wall and Ms. Lewis. The situation was quickly getting worse.

*Just sign the damn book*, he thought. So he did. To distract himself from Miss Lewis, he thought about Tina.

He signed with a flourish and handed it back to her. Miss Lewis grinned, taking it, and she lowered her lashes so she could read the inscription, and then her smile froze. Blush crawled up her cheeks.

Newt flinched. "I'm sorry, is there--"

"My name isn't Tina."

"I'm--I'm sorry?"

She turned the book around. Much to his mortification, he saw that he had inscribed the book to Tina. The page crinkled under Miss Lewis' grip.
"Oh," Newt didn't know how else to continue. Miss Lewis snatched up her bag and hurried to the other side of the car. Newt rubbed his head, then after a moment shrugged and smiled to himself. Subways were much more dangerous then he thought.

***

Once he came out of the subway, people thronged all around him. He ducked his head and continued across the street. The sunlight was piercing bright today, cutting the icy edge that had lingered the past couple days. The windows gleamed like they were covered in water. For a moment, Newt lingered. The air felt charged somehow, as if every person that passed contributing their own static electricity to the air. The sky was high and hopeful blue against the skyline.

It all felt very American.

He turned and faced Jacob's shop. Instantly he noticed something was wrong. For one, the windows were dark. No one bustled in or out. Even the little trays in the window were empty. Newt drew closer and finally saw the "Closed" sign.

Well, he thought. Bugger. He'd fought off a predator for nothing this morning.

"You lookin' for Kowalski?"

Newt turned his head. A man in an apron swept a broom outside the store next door. He had a cigarette in his mouth and tasteful wire rims.

Newt straightened. "I'm a friend of his, actually. Is he...well, his shop is closed, so..."

The man shrugged, leaning on his broom. He studied Newt for a moment. Newt tried very hard not to shift his weight, and put on a smile. The man finally said,

"Been closed for a few days, if you're wonderin'."

"Is Ja--Mr.Kowalski unwell?" Newt asked.

"Hard to say. Mr. Kowalski isn't the kind to get the colds but with this damn cold winter it’s hard to say. I did hear he hadn’t been feeling too well on Saturday, though."

Saturday, Newt thought. Was that the day after he and Tina had visited him? Something didn't sit right in his bones with that. Though it had only been a few days ago.

"Oh. I see. Well, um, would you happen to know where I could find him?"

"You mean where he lives?"

It did sound suspicious when he put it like that, but Newt's worries were making him a bit more reckless. "Yes, exactly."

"Well," the man's eyes softened. "Yeah, somebody better check on him. One second and I'll write it down for you."

After the shop man provided him an address (which Newt already knew) and some directions (which Newt didn't know), Newt found himself back on the subway. He couldn't sit still in his chair, and finally ended up standing. It was much less crowded this time around.

He turned the last time he saw Jacob over in his mind. Everything had seemed quite normal, besides...well, Moira. Moira and done something with that coin. The little boy who had been with
her and looked at the coin like it was some sort of plague. But then Moira had taken it back—and
then, he realized, when they'd found her on the rooftop, those gang men had known she had gone to
visit Jacob.

What if they went after Jacob?

Newt felt a bit nauseous as he climbed the stairs out of the subway and into the familiar tenement
district. There wasn't an angry mob, now, and Jacob's building looked a bit sootier but in one piece.
Newt made his way inside, climbed the stairs two at a time, and picked through his memory for the
right door. When he reached it, his heart skipped again.

The door was open a crack.

Heart steadily beating faster, Newt nudged the door open with his foot. "Mr. Kowalski?"

Music drifted over to him. The room smelled like fresh bread and some sort of meat cooking. When
Newt fully stuck his head in, he could already see most of the apartment. More important, he saw
Jacob sitting at his little half table, sipping coffee and staring straight at the blank wall. Jacob was
murmuring to himself.

Newt rocked back on his heels. His eyes scanned the room. Jacob's mother smiled at him from the
wall. The bed was neatly made. Nothing looked particularly out of place. So why had Jacob not
come to work? Newt went to take another step inside when his arm brushed against an unseen
umbrella rack. The whole device toppled over, clattering and throwing hats, and then Jacob jumped
up and spun. He held his fork out like a bayonet.

Newt threw up his hands and ducked his head, bracing himself. But Jacob's expression shifted to
confusion.

"You," Jacob said.

"Hello," Newt said.

Jacob blinked rapidly and lowered his fork. Newt straightened a little, keeping his head ducked, and
said,

"Mr. Kowalski, I'm so sorry for the intrustion, but I thought with the door and—anyway, you may
not remember me, but my name is—"

"Newt Scamander," Jacob’s eyes narrowed, then widened. A huge smile burst across his face.
"Newt! God, when did you get back from England? How’s the Demiguise doin'? And the
Occamies?"

"I'm sorry?"

Jacob came over and wrapped Newt in a hug, clapping him on the back before pulling away a bit.
Newt felt a bit like a rag doll being yanked around. "Hey, Newt, you look good. Tanner or
something. And hey, you got your book published! Congratulations are in order then. I forgot to tell
you last time I saw you but well, I hadn't known you know?"

Newt gaped as Jacob finally released him and went over to the stove. It took Newt a few seconds to
regain his composure and he said, quickly, "Mr. Kowalski, you're speaking some rather...some
nonsense, and I am very confused as to why—"

"I remember, Newt."
Newt stared. He felt like his brain had fallen into his shoes. He stopped breathing for so long that Pickett, who was in fact in his pocket, squeaked in alarm and rose out to survey the situation. Jacob smiled and waved to Pickett.

“Jacob,” Newt said. “How is that possible?”

Jacob’s smile faded. He rubbed the side of his neck, where the Murtlap had bitten him, and finally gestured to the single chair in the room.

“You might wanna sit for this one, Newt.”

***

“...and when I turned around, someone hit me over the head,” Jacob scratched his forehead, like he could still feel the hit. “And when I woke up, it was like...this crazy rush. I thought at first I’d drunk somethin’ or was drunk. After all, magic and everything we went through and Que—anyway, I tried to go in that night to do the baking, but every time I looked at one of my pastries I thought ‘that’s a Demiguise, that’s an Erumpet,’ and it was. I don’t know how to describe it.”

Newt was listening, rapt. Jacob smiled to himself. “I mean I was happy, but, I also knew I was remembering things I wasn’t s’posed to. So I took the weekend off. I don’t know what kind of trouble I’ll get into remembering all this. And I was a bit scared, to be honest. Queenie must have told you all of this already, right?”

“Queenie,” Newt repeated. He’d been reduced to single word answers, now. Jacob nodded, his smile broadening.

“Yeah. That day, actually, that I was remembering, she came by. Total coincidence. We looked at each other and...well. I remembered, and she saw I remembered, and...” Jacob smiled into his coffee. Newt decided not to press on in that angle.

"Jacob, have any other’s remembered what happened? Any other Muggles?"

“No,” Jacob shook his head. “I’ve asked around. Nothing.”

Newt sat back in the chair Jacob had brought over for him. He tapped his wand against his mouth. It was the timing that struck him as odd. Right after Jacob sees them, sees Moira, someone brings on his memories that same night?

“Aren't you happy?"

Newt started. "What?"

Jacob was a little bent over the table, swirling his coffee around and around in his mug and avoiding his eyes. "Nothin'. I was just..."

"No, this is great, I mean," Newt reached out and grabbed Jacob's forearm. Jacob jumped a bit, but Newt didn't let go. "I am very happy that you got your memories back, Jacob. Very happy. Because it will be, um, it will be nice...It will make me very happy to have a friend again. Especially now, but, um--"

"Hey," Jacob smiled. "I get it, Newt. You don't have to explain anymore. I understand perfectly."

"Great," Newt smiled back.
"Yeah. But, um, I need my arm to grab my coffee."

"Sure."

The two sipped their coffee for a few minutes, and Newt was happier then he'd been all day.

Chapter End Notes

GAH IT TOOK ME SO LONG TO UPDATE ..ah well it's fine. The real question is WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT>>>>See you later!
Chapter Summary

More Kyrans and more coins and Newt probably won't be going home any time soon.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It didn’t take long for the two men to get back in the case. Jacob glowed with a smile as he looked around the shed that, now that he understood, he'd seen in his dreams countless times. But now it was quite real.

Newt handed over the Mooncalf pellets. Jacob took them and the mooncalves seemed to recognize him. Jacob noticed the Obscuris section was gone (he ignored the pang of regret there) and had been replaced by an expanded area for the Graphorns, who now had more kids. While they took care of the creatures, Newt filled Jacob in on the situation as best he could. It was a little awkward at first. After all, unlike Tina, Newt hadn’t written Jacob in the year they’d been separated. Still, Jacob smoothed that over soon enough, and Newt soon remembered what it was like to have someone so good a listener.

“So, a dragon, huh?” Jacob said.

Newt nodded. He had his wand in his mouth as he checked the wing of one of his Occamies. Two of them had had a spat the other day, resulting in one being injured. When he finished, he said, “I’m fairly certain it is either a Peruvian Vipertooth or perhaps a Horntail. Neither prospect is a pleasant one.”

“What’s a—you know,” Jacob shook his head, smiling, “I'll just look in your book, huh?”

Newt nodded, distracted by Dougal's nest. Jacob wove his way back to the shed. Newt’s book laid on the shelf to the side. Jacob grabbed it, but his eyes caught on some of the Newt’s sketches he had tacked around. He saw some sort of creature repeated over and over. It looked the way Jacob would imagine a dragon, only it was small, and had feathers...like a bird and a lizard with cat eyes...

The other pictures were more easy to pin, and Jacob smiled to himself as he recognized Tina’s face pitched up here or there. Queenie had dropped hints but he was still surprised that Newt would keep pictures of her out in the open like that.

Then again, Newt's case was like a piece of himself.

Smiling, Jacob flipped through Newt's book until he came to the dragon section. It only took a few sentences for his smile to fade.

Jacob leaned out the door. “I thought you said that Vipertoohs had been weeded down or something?”

“The local ministry did try to limit their numbers, yes, because they were so dangerous to humans. But they didn’t kill them all off.”
“And...you’ve worked with them before?”

“In a sense,” Newt came over. “As much as I could, really. The locals wouldn’t let me get too close to one to do as much research as I like. They’re considered one of the most deadly of dragons.”

“And you think there’s two of them running around New York City?”

“Yes. Somehow, this leader of the Falcons fellow has managed—“

“The Falcons?” Jacob said. Newt expected a following “who is that?” but instead Jacob started back a little, his dark eyes narrowing.

“You know of them,” Newt said, surprised. Jacob shrugged.

“Yeah. Where I used to live, anyway, before I got the bakery open, the Falcons offered employment for, ya know.” When Newt seemed to not know, Jacob said, “Bootleggin’ kind of stuff. Ran speakeasies, dance parlors. Had no idea they were magic though.”

“Well, Moira’s afraid of them.”

“I don’t blame the kid for that.”

Newt nodded and went towards the Kyran enclosure. Jacob followed. The Kyrans were all clustered around the tree and they squawked at Newt in unison before flying down to meet him. Newt held the bag of feed over his head as they circled around his feet.

“Yes, yes,” Newt said, faintly scolding. “But since this is the last bag, we’ll have to have a little less.”

“These are the creatures you were drawing,” Jacob said. Newt threw some of the feed on the ground. Inexplicably, the Kyrans all rushed into the air, which then made sense when the feed began to float. Then the Kyrans dove down to catch the pellets, like eagles diving for fish. The speed and grace of their arking colors gave Jacob pause.

“Yes,” Newt said. “The girl, Moira, I was originally interested in her because she has a Kyran. They’re going extinct, you know...” As Newt kept explaining, and Jacob listened, Oliver swooped and landed in front of Jacob.

“Uh,” Jacob said to Oliver. “No food, buddy. Sorry.”

Oliver kept his gaze on Jacob and slowly lowered his neck, making a small hissing sound.

“Newt,” Jacob said. Then, “Hey, Newt.”

“Just keep still and maintain eye contact. I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

Jacob remembered how Newt’s idea of fine wasn’t necessarily conventional and swallowed. But the Kyran made a little barking noise, bobbed his head towards Jacob, and flew off. The three circled overhead as Newt sat next to the new feed can, fixing the lid. Jacob sat next to him. There was an easy silence for a little while as Newt worked and Jacob contented himself with watching the Kyrans float.

Around them, the case hummed with life and color and magic and Jacob was glad, even if it was terrifying, to remember that he had a place here.

“Hey,” Jacob said. “Weren’t you going to ask me something about Tina?”
“Oh. Yes. Right. Well,” Newt stopped fiddling, then shook his head and kept working. He kept his voice casual. “Well, you see, I would like to take Tina on a date. But I’m not sure—” he was interrupted as Jacob clapped him on the back. Newt smiled and continued, avoiding eye contact, “Yes, it’s very good, only I have no idea where to take her or how to make conversation about it.”

“Well, I’m sure you magic people have other places to go then people like me,” Jacob said. “Not sure how much help I’ll be there.”

Newt looked like he’d been smacked over the head. “Bugger. I hadn’t even thought about that.”

Jacob was surprised by how accomplished he felt at blending into his world.

“Regardless of magic or not,” Jacob said. “You should take her somewhere she likes. That you think she’ll like. And somewhere you feel comfortable. In control.”

“In control,” Newt repeated. He looked disturbed.

“Maybe that’s not the best word,” Jacob added. "I mean more, ya know, just somewhere you feel comfortable. Yeah, so you won’t be as tense.”

“Unfortunately, most of the human world doesn’t fit into that scenario.”

“Then take her here.”

Newt started. “What?”

“Yeah,” Jacob gestured around him. “Just take her on a date in here. You can make whatever you want in here, right? Why not?”

Newt looked around and saw his workspace. He saw his creatures living their lives peacefully, but also the wall in the Snarlygaster home needed fixing, and he should probably sweep a bit as Dougal was insisting on throwing his nest hay everywhere.

Where was the romance?

Newt liked to read books. Not necessarily romance, but it was hard to find a book without it tucked somewhere, and the rituals of romance shifted so much around cultures, but he knew a few things. Like candles. And warm food. And soft...soft things. He blushed to himself and coughed. He could conjure all those things, he supposed. It would be exhausting. For Tina it would be worth it.

Jacob almost laughed to himself, watching Newt’s eyes turn over his space. Suddenly, though, Newt started and reached into hs pocket. He pulled out a fine pocketwatch and grimaced.

“We’ve been down here for hours,” Newt murmured.

Jacob jumped up. “What?”

“Come on,” Newt headed to the shed. “Let’s head back up, shall we?”

It wasn’t too soon, either, because as soon as they opened the case, they heard someone banging on the door.

Jacob winced. He’d paid rent, though, so it shouldn’t be his foreman.

“Aren’t you expecting anyone?” Newt said. Jacob looked over. His friend’s eyes were narrowed, his hand reaching for his wand, and Jacob flinched.
“No,” Jacob said. “Why are you...”

"Just in case," Newt said softly. He looked about as comfortable with the situation as Jacob felt, so Jacob drifted to the door and peered through the peephole.

No one stood there.

He looked back and shook his head. Newt blinked in confusion. Jacob opened the door, and peered up and down the hall, even up at the ceiling, but saw no one or nothing.

Newt came up behind him. "Peculiar. Unsettling too."

"Yeah." Jacob looked down at the hall floor. Dried mud was tracked around his door frame, the kind that flakes off boots. That wasn't important, because in the center of all the dried mud, was a flashing gold coin. Jacob crouched down and picked it up.

Then he threw it away from him like it was a plague.

"What?" Newt said.

"Don't touch it," Jacob said.

Newt looked up and down the hall, then using his wand floated the coin over to them. It turned slowly in front of him, noting how Jacob was staring at it and shaking. On one side was a falcon, and as he watched it flew in and out of the coin radius, screeching occasionally.

"It's like the coin the girl tried to pay you with," Newt said.

"It is?" Jacob was sweating. "Well damn, if I had known that--"

"What does it mean?"

Jacob's response was to grab Newt and pull him back inside the apartment. He looked up and down the hall again before closing the door. Newt's eyes darted from the coin to Jacob to the door and back to Jacob.

Jacob ran his hand over his mouth, then pointed. "It's a peace token. From the Falcons. It means they've marked me."

"Marked you?" Newt had images of animals marking their territory. Lions killing Lions.

"Yeah. It means I did something, something to make them angry, and now they're tellin' me they got eyes on me."

"But what did you do?" Newt asked.

Jacob did not have an answer.

"What should we do?" Newt said, more to himself then anything. He began to pace. His expression grew more tense with each step, and Jacob felt a twinge of pity.

"I mean, we could go...go to..."

But they couldn't go to Tina for help. Jacob did not want to come between that Miss Goldstein and her job, because he was honestly a bit unsure as to how she would react.
"It wouldn't be fair to bring it to Tina," Newt murmured. "She shouldn't have to make that choice."

"Yeah," Jacob said, only half convinced but unsure what to do otherwise. After talking in circles for a few more minutes, they concluded that Jacob should probably just go back to work. Act like nothing had happened.

"I'll just keep it on me," Jacob said. "That's what you have to do, when they mark you. That way they know...they know you're on their side."

"Well," Newt said. "I'm on your side too. And so is...Queenie, I'm sure. And Tina would be, if-"

"You don't have to explain." Jacob smiled and meant it. "Just, well, head back to the girl's place, okay? Or your hotel or something. Go straight there."

"Okay," Newt was in the doorway. At the last second, Newt spun and clapped his hand awkwardly on Jacob's shoulder. Jacob started, but seeing Newt's shining eyes, smiled and nodded. Newt released him and walked out.

Chapter End Notes

Hello all! First off, thank you so much for reading! It's really cool that people still ARE reading, lol...

Anyway, I apologize for the late updates (*intense bowing*) and see you guys on the next update where we find out...how would Newt take Tina on a date? PS: send ideas if you want ^_^

~lize
Shattered Expectations

Chapter Summary

Newt goes on adventure by himself and almost gets clobbered by a baseball.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Now that he had a sense of what sort of dragon he was looking for, Newt wanted a sense of the terrain the dragon may be staying in. The map of the explosions had shown a greater concentration in Moira's ward then in any others. There would probably be signs, then, of dragon activity. Scratches, prints, scorches, that sort of thing. Not to mention, if he saw Moira, he could ask her where she bought the Kyran feed. Or, he could ask her why she ran off.

These were all the reasons Newt told himself on the train as he decided not to tell Tina where he was going. She would probably be irritated since he was the "Watson" in their relationship, but he also knew this sort of journey he could handle without troubling her. He'd already troubled her enough, hadn't he?

So here Newt was, on the train to the stop that he and Tina had journeyed to before when they were tracking Moira. There was that Apothecary shop that they always found her at. It was probably a good starting point. Or he'd wander a little. Newt actually didn’t mind this sort of wandering. Despite Tina’s incessant worry, sometimes he felt like she forgot that he had traveled extensively, wandered through foreign markets and jungles and the like and had come out (if not unscathed) alive and more knowledgable.

As he exited the subway, he screwed on his researcher's cap, and examined the slums as one would a new terrain. For one, the time of day meant most of the men were at work. What surprised him was the lack of women about, hinting that they were working as well.

The air seemed more settled here then it did in Tina’s neighborhood. No rushing cars, no bustling fur coats. A few elderly men in suspenders sat on stoops, chatting and smoking, while elderly women hung the clothes so they dripped down into the alleys or sometimes even across the street. Children scattered and squawked around the sidewalks like cheerful birds with scraped knees and ripped coats. Most of the shops had creaking old signs half picture, half words, and one made him stop.

*O’Connor’s,* it read, with the symbol for Apothecary and Pharmacy under it. This was where Moira was always coming out of, where Declan had said she “did rounds” for. The sign appeared new but the shop itself was peeling green with warped windows.

Someone yelled overhead, and Newt quickly jumped out of the way as a chamberpot was emptied a few feet away.

That explained some of the smells, then.

A shadow passed in front of the windows a second before the shop door swung open, and a red faced man in a green stained apron lunged out.
“Rosetta!” He yelled, “What I tell you about dumpin’ your shit in front of m’ shop?”

The woman above yelled something back, and Newt decided to cough and look the other way as Mr. O’Connor replied with equal gusto. Across the street, the kids were giggling and pointing. One of them, a gangly girl with blonde braids, eyed Newt with an almost familiar intensity. He smiled and she looked away.

“Well?” the shopkeeper said to him, distracting Newt.

“I beg your pardon?” Newt replied.

The man had small blue eyes ringed with red and his mustache reminded Newt of a sink scrubber. “Well, are you comin’ into the shop or not?”

“Oh, I was just...um, passing.”

“Well, make sure Rosetta doesn’t throw out another pitch, will you? If you’re gonna be standin’ there anyway.”

And the shopkeeper (Newt assumed) moved back into the shop. Newt realized where Moira might have gotten some of her brusque manners. He decided to side step the puddle and continue on a ways.

A few doors down, two women were stringing their laundry across the alleyway, visible to the street. He stopped to watch, vaguely amused at how No Maj’s took care of basic needs. The clothes hung and dripped like they were exhausted from a long run. The women above were calling to each other about something. Newt knew enough of Polish to discern that the rope had snagged. His amusement returned and was followed by a little pity. If the string broke, all the clothes would fall on the ground, and have to be washed again.

Newt almost considered using some magic. Just to help them have an easier time of it.

Above, one of the women made some sort of hand signal. The second woman nodded. As Newt watched, the first woman obviously turned around, putting her back to the window. The second woman’s head swapped back and forth, eyes casing the street, then she extended her hand and flicked her wrist.

The clothes all lifted into the air. Magically.

Unweighted, the string began to unknot itself. The magic woman’s eyes narrowed with concentration as the rope retied itself, and the clothes floated back into place. When she finished, she called something, and the first woman turned and smiled. The magic woman waved her off.

Newt could practically hear Tina’s voice saying Blatant code violation. Newt looked up and down the street. The men still smoked. The children still played. Members of Diagon Alley couldn’t be more unaffected.

No, not totally accurate. Two women a little ways down were staring and pointing. Newt drew closer, keeping his presence unassuming. He could soon hear them speaking.

“...must be nice to have such an easy time of it.”

“Easy time?” The woman laughed. “You know how many spells misfire in your face before you get that good?”
“I guess I wouldn’t know, not bein’ magic like you, Jude Murray.”

“Oh come off it, Joan. Magic or not magic, people still make messes.”

“Don’t I know it.”

The two women laughed, obviously comfortable with each other, and then they both seemed to notice Newt at the same time, with that eerie sympathy that women seemed to have. He nodded a second before turning around and walking quickly the other way. His thoughts spun. Magic people and non-magic people weren’t supposed to be friends. Magic use without a wand. No one seemed to care?

And now that Newt was looking for it, paying attention, he could see other signs of discreet magic. In one of the shadier alleys, a broom and pan were sweeping by itself. One of the men’s pipes puffed smoke that formed little dragons as it left the pipe. And more than one child, when Newt was looking for it, was throwing their arms in odd, pointed ways that reminded Newt of when Ferdi had fought with him. Newt remembered doing similar things with his brother when he was young. Before they had their wands.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to go inside the Apothecary after all.

On the inside, the Apothecary reminded Newt a bit of Ollivander’s, with its shadowy corners and seeming hundreds of bottles and shelves. Just without the dust and cobwebs. The longest case had glass clear as air and ran the length of the shop. The herbs within were displayed in neat, tidy rows. The wall behind the longest case was lined with rich wooden shelving backed by a mirror.

The angry shop man stood behind that case.

“Knew you weren’t just a wanderin’,” The shopkeeper said. “What can I help you with, sir?”

“I thought I might just look around a moment, if you do not mind.”

“Not at all,” the shopkeeper said. “My name’s O’Connor. If you need help, just call for it. Help yourself.”

Newt did as he was told. He wove his way through the maze of glass cases. It smelled vaguely earthy but not in an unpleasant way. Newt identified most of the herbs and was surprised by how many were from other countries outside the United States. He also noticed how some labels were in red ink, compared to the others, and some bunches of herbs were tied with red yarn, while the rest were tied off with plain white string.

He made his way back to the front. “Excuse me?”

“Yes, mister?”

“I’ve noticed that some of these are tied of with red string. Does that signify anything?”

“It depends on the purchase,” he said. “Do you have one bunch in particular you’re lookin’ at?”

“Oh no. I was just curious.”

“I see,” Mr. O’Connor said with a glitter in his eyes. Newt nodded and vanished back to where he was. Heading towards the back of the store, Newt noticed more dust. Less light too. Perhaps customers weren’t meant to go this far back. Still, there were cases, and Newt peered into each one. His mind raced. He was trying to figure out how to explain all of this to Tina. Magic in the streets
where Muggles were lingering. Even in England that was frowned upon. He couldn’t imagine what sort of field day the MACUSA would have if they found out...but why here? What was different about this area that the other areas didn’t have?

He almost bumped into a case. He rubbed his knee, cursing to himself, but he’d reached the back of the store and kept walking so it should have been expected. This case was as neatly laid out as the others, but most of the herbs were tied off with the red string. They didn’t necessarily have paper labels either. Perhaps the owner just expected the buyer to know what dried Mandrake looked like. True, it was distinctive, what with the scrunched faces and all—

Newt started back. He blinked a few times, then peered in. Nope. That was Mandrake. And next to it was a plethora of Dittany that even the Herbology professor at Hogwarts would be jealous of.

Newt turned as if he expected the shopowner to be hovering over his shoulder. But the front of the shop seemed leagues away. Newt’s thumbs twiddled around with his coat pockets until it closed around his case. It soothed him a bit. Helped him think. What did it matter, if the shop carried magical herbs? This far back, most Muggles wouldn’t venture. They liked the same sort of well-lit loops of places. They liked going where they felt safe.

Newt turned around and headed to the front of the shop. O’Connor was writing in a receipt book, checking back and forth between that and another journal full of neat columns.

“Excuse me,” Newt said. “May I ask your opinion on something? As an apothecary.”

“Of course,” said Mr. O’Connor.

“You see I’m having this issue, while I’m—er, sleeping.”

The apothecary’s lips quirked. “Is anyone else in the bed with you during this time when you’re having trouble?”

“What? No!” Newt flushed deep red and reminded himself that he was a mature adult. “I mean, with nightmares. They wake me up from sleeping.”

Mr. O’Connor looked up now and repeated, “Nightmares.”

Newt took a moment to respond, staring through the case. One of the crystals flickered back and forth between red and green, like it was breathing. Was magic literally everywhere?

“Sir?”

“Sorry,” Newt said. “I meant I need something to help me fall asleep at night. Something non addictive, not too strong. Ah, affordable is also preferable.”

Mr. O’Connor's expression had softened quite a bit, suddenly, and he asked, “You fought in the war, son?”

“Yes,” Newt said honestly. Mr. O’Connor nodded.

“Pardon the askin’. I just get a lot of young men like you coming in for that. Nightmares. More boys than I’d like.” O’Connor started walking back behind the case, inspecting the bottles, speaking while he did. “Never fought in it myself. Got a bad leg. The missus says I got a bad head, too, but they didn’t think to test for that.”

Newt smiled. He hoped it didn’t look strained. While Mr. O’Connor rummaged through a shelf,
Newt thought about bringing up the Mandrakes somehow. Then again, if he could spot another magical herb, that would take care of things nicely. But the ones in the front case did not suit that purpose.

“Well, here we go,” Mr. O’Connor laid out a few bottles of different sizes. “We’ve got your usual opiate, though it’s a bit more potent then you might like, then we got a sedative that is made in house. I used to be able to recommend whiskey, but you know how that goes.”

“I see,” Newt turned instantly away. “Could you tell me, what’s that herb on the far back wall? It has this funny look you know.”

“Funny.” Mr. O’Connor did not sound impressed.

“Well, it looks like it has a face, to be honest. I know that’s an odd thing to say, but...” Newt trained his look on Mr. O’Connor’s expression, looking for a trip. Besides a quick blink, O’Connor didn’t skip.

“That is a funny thing to say,” Mr. O’Connor smiled. “Well, it’s a pretty specialized ingredient. Won’t work for a sleeping draught, anyway, so I wouldn’t worry about it.”

“What would I use it for?”

“Unless you’re a doctor doin’ housecalls, I wouldn’t sell it to you. Now, which draught looks good to you? Or are you gonna to ask what you really want t’ ask?”

Newt flinched. His fingers rapped across the top of the case. O’Connor leaned on the counter then pointed to the window. “You’ve been checkin’ out my window every second you’ve been here, like you’re expecting someone.”

“I just...”

“I also wanted to compliment you on that coat. Very pleasant shade of blue. Memorable. Gotta weird loop on the inside though.”

Newt just waited. His hand slipped into the mentioned loop, which was for his wand.

“Don’t pull your wand, Mr. Scamander,” Mr. O’Connor said. “I’m not going to hurt you. I couldn’t if I wanted to.”

“Because someone’ll see you?”

“Nah. I’m a No Maj.”

Newt just sputtered for a second. “But—but—the mandrakes!”

“The mandrakes don’t complain much about being in my shop. They’re dead after all.”

“I thought...Mug-No Maj’s and wizards...”

“You’ll soon find this district doesn’t play by the same rules. Now,” Mr. O’Connor crossed his arms in a brawling sort of way. “We got that outta the way. You’re going to tell me what you want, or I exercise my right to throw you outta my shop.”

“I need to find Moira.”

Mr. O’Connor straightened. A bit of silence fell. Someone was shouting headlines outside. The shop
“Why?” Mr. O’Connor asked. “And no lies.”

“I need to know who supplies the food for her Kyran.” Newt answered. He didn’t have time to be coy.

Mr. O’Connor rolled his fingertips across the glass case top. It sounded like waves pounding against Newt's head. O’Connor's eyes were piercing now, the red sleepiness far gone. A few minutes passed before he finally said, “She gets it from Shaughnessy’s. If he’ll sell it to you, I don’t know. He might tell you where he gets it from. He’s a bit of a gossip, to be honest.”

Newt wasn’t exactly sure why O’Connor added that on to the end, but took it anyway. “That’s excellent to know, thank you.” Newt was heading towards the door when O’Connor called out.

“Hey, Mr. Scamander.”

Newt turned. Braced himself. “Yes?”

Mr. O’Connor was leaning back against the glass case now, facing ahead. His shoulders were squared back and it was a bit difficult to read his expression. Newt thought he might look a bit sad.

“You keep Moira out of your trouble, kay?” O’Connor’s voice was low. “Some people have been through enough already.”

Newt was tempted to ask for more, but Mr. O’Connor did not seem the persuadable type. Instead Newt resisted his curiosity and left the store.

There were more kids in the street now. The two women that had been chatting on the stoop were gone. He considered approaching the smoking men but then thought better of it. Newt didn't even smoke, and judging by the men's cranky looks they were probably complaining about their wives, of which Newt had little experience to contribute.

Well, he thought. It was probably best to return back to Tina and Queenie’s place. Perhaps wait for Tina to get home. He could start planning, too, for their...date. Even thinking the word made Newt feel a little nauseous. Which was ridiculous, since he’d already kissed her and, well, fought off an Obscurus with her, so between those two terrifying things what he was doing now shouldn’t—

“Head’s up, mister!”

Newt barely ducked in time. He felt something fly through his hair a second before the window near him shattered into pieces. On the ground, Newt heard more than saw the stampede of feet running towards him.

“Hey, mister, are you okay?”

“Did it hit ‘im in the head?”

“Shit, my ma’s gonna skin me for this.”

“Hey mister, why are you on the ground?”

“Mister?”

Newt looked up to see a flock of excited if a bit ragged children around him. They all stared at him, some like he was an injured bird, other’s like he was an injured snake about to bite. One of them, a
small boy with large dark eyes, suddenly jumped and pointed at him.

“You’re the Demiguise man!” he said. “I remember you!”

“Pardon?” Newt said.

At that word, the kids all visibly took a step back and a few smirked. It was a second before one of them mimicked Newt's accent, and a few others laughed.

“Hey, you guys,” a girl said this time. It was the one with the braids. “Forget the stodge. What are we gonna do ‘bout the window?”

“You hit the ball,” the large eyed boy said, forgetting promptly about Newt now that he knew he was alright. “You go get it.”

“But there’s glass,” the girl said. “What if I get cut?”

The kids pondered this seriously for a moment. Then, the large eyed boy snapped his fingers and said, “If you get hurt, we’ll take you to Moira. She’ll fix you up fast.”

All the kids agreed this was a valid idea while Newt gaped at them all. Then the boy said, “Go for it, Lucy!” and the rest of the kids began to chant that like it was a religious rite. It was a little unnerving. Newt took the opportunity to scramble up and away. When he glanced back, the girl Lucy was climbing through the broken window to get the ball, and the other kids were circled around her and still chanting. Newt vaguely wondered where the adults or the parents were.

It wasn’t till he was on the train that he realized that unless the kids were talking about another Moira, he’d completely missed the opportunity to find her again.

“Bloody bugger hell,” he muttered to himself. The only other person on the train was a small woman with a large bird on her hat who was already muttering, so Newt continued cursing to himself. Still, the day was not a total loss in his mind. He knew someone who might help him feed his Kyrans, and he had plenty of information to tell Tina over dinner. A nice dinner, he thought, with candles. And soft things.

But as he exited the train, Newt quickly realized that Tina would probably be happier if he had talked to Moira when he could. He glanced back at the train, then around the platform. It was empty. Still, he vanished behind one of the pillars before Disapparating.

Perhaps it was a good time to see Shaughnessy after all.

Chapter End Notes

I delayed the date because Newt delayed the date. Anyway, hope you all have a nice weekend coming up! Thanks for the reading :D
A Moment of Sharp Collision

Chapter Summary

Explosive revelations coming up.

*Also slight warning for some graphic images of a dead body. Just sayin'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tina’s day had been going fairly well so far. She had catalogued the information she had attained from the brief interview she’d managed with Moira—though it mostly came down to the explosion was scary and people were probably inside it when it happened—and she’d managed to ask around for information on the Spirit Seals. So far, the only thing she’d gotten out of the last part was quite a few odd looks and Martha from Human Resources sending a rat memo about a possible counseling session. Tina had nudged the rat into a furnace, and continued working on her own.

Finally, the end of the day approached. Her head was starting to hurt. Taking a break, she began to nudge her pencil up and down her unlevel desk. When they’d given Tina her job back, they’d put her out in the huge open room where all the Auror's in her department worked. The sound of typewriters rushed on constantly, followed by the smell of coffee and fresh ink. Voices murmured too. For the most part, magic was kept to a quiet minimum up here. Huge windows dominated the west facing wall. A office witch was currenly lowering the blinds but the sunset was still pretty gorgeous.

She’d had a harder time readjusting to her workplace again. Not because the work was harder. But because she often had a feeling that the murmured conversations were about herself. Asking for a magical Seal that didn’t seem to exist on any paper record didn’t help.

“Hey, Goldstein.”

Tina looked up. Robert Haywood, Auror for one year longer than her, strolled up in a freshly pressed blazer and a smart smile. He said, “Heard you were looking in to some old cases around the fourth No Maj district?”

Tina considered ignoring Robert, knowing as soon as she did engage he would insist on sitting on her desk and leering down at her. Still, his case district was the fourth, which mean he could be valuable. So Tina looked up and kept her smiling to the bare minimum. “Yeah, I am.”

“Well,” his smile widened, and despite her barely hidden grimace, he sat on the edge of her desk. “Why don’t you run some of those facts by me and I’ll see what I can make of them?”

“It’s not a normal case,” Tina said. She pulled out the sketches she had made while in the warehouse. Robert laughed.

“Sister, I know you’ve been off the job a bit,” Something you love to point out, dumb Robert, “but even you gotta know that most cases dealing with dark magic ain’t normal.”

She held the sketches up to him but he waved them off. Confused, she laid them down in front of her
and he leaned over her shoulder to look at them. Truthfully, she figured he was looking down her shirt more than her reports. She fought the urge to turn his hand that casually leaned on her chair to stone.

He made a noise. When she looked up, his brows were knitted together.

“I don’t recognize these markings,” Robert said. “It ain’t runes, at least not any I remember from school.”

Before Tina could say that yes, she already knew that, Robert suddenly grabbed all the papers.

“Hey!” Tina cried, but Robert was already moving to the next desk.

“Hey Tock,” Robert said. “What do you make of these?”

Tock, who’s full name was Joseph Tocapanski, squinted up from his work. He held a small brush in one hand and a piece of stone in the other. He set the brush down to take the paper, but gave Tina a sympathetic, owlish look.

“This is your’s, right Miss Goldstein?” Tock said.

Tina rose and nodded. She went to Robert’s side. When Robert moved a step towards her, Tina promptly changed course to stand behind Mr. Tocopanski. Tock gazed intently at the drawings, sifting through them. When he reached the final one of the ring, which Tina had labeled, Seal? he stopped.

A few seconds passed where Mr. Tocapanski said nothing and didn’t move.

“Mr. Tocapanski?” Tina said. “What are you—”

Tock spun in his chair and was then was standing and gripping Tina’s arms with more strength then someone as frail as him should possess. Tina flinched back from his intense gaze.

“Where were these sketches from?” Tock demanded. “Where?”

“I drew them from what I saw at the explosions I’ve been investigating,” Tina answered quickly. "It was in a warehouse and—"

Tock whirled. “We don’t have much time!” He grabbed his wand from his desk and his coat. His hands were shaking. Tina rubbed her arms from where he had gripped her.

The office was going still at the ruckus and Tina intervened by grabbing Tock’s arm.

“Mister,” Tina said, “what’s wrong?”

“It’s a Spirit Seal!” Tock said, “If it’s not broken, then it will suck the life out of anyone who comes anywhere near that building! We have to break it! It’ll take at least twenty, no, thirty of us Aurors together and that means I need make a request of President Picquery about——"

“Woah!” Now Tina grabbed Tock’s shoulder, which was half in his coat. “It’s already been broken, Mr. Tocapanski.”

Tock froze. “Pardon?”

“I said it’s been broken. Or that’s what...” For some reason, Tina didn’t want to mention Moira yet. Not here to Tock’s glowing eyes. “I heard from the rumors that it was broken by someone already.”
“One?” Tock repeated. “As in, one person broke the Seal?”

“Yes, just one.” When Tock just stared at her, his expression somewhere between awe and fear, Tina said, “Why is that important?”

The office was almost dead silent, now, and Tock looked around like he’d just realized where he was. Color rushed into his face. Well, that was good, since Tina had been worrying he would have a heart attack. Tock coughed and straightened.

“Miss Goldstein,” he said, softer now. “If you would be so kind as to accompany me to lunch? I have a case you might find interesting to your investigation.”

Moira thanked God every day for Mr. O’Connor’s work room behind his shop. It was the kind of place where a tornado could rip past (and it had, on one occasion thirty years ago) and the inside would remain the same. The same weathered wooden table. The same three cauldrons all boiling away. The same spread of herbs, potions, and the like pinned and stacked on the shelf wall. Moira had finished all her work for the week, true, but doing some of the more menial apprentice works for O’Connor always worked to clear her head.

She needed it now more than ever. She’d barely slept since she’d broken the Seal. It felt like fireflies were dancing under her skin. She’d been waiting to hear the clomp of boots surrounding her workshop, or the rattle of the door being blown in. The laughter of Falcon’s closing in for the kill. And yet, nothing. The nothing was almost worse than anything else.

“Careful, or there won’t be any newt to pluck the eye from.”

Moira started from her thoughts and turned to see Declan leaning in the doorway that connected the workshop to the main shop. She almost snapped that she wasn’t even extracting eyes, but calmed herself.

“What are you doing here?” She asked. Declan smiled.

“Just picking up the books for O’Connor. He told me he needed to speak with you about something.”

Right, Moira thought. She sometimes forgot that while Declan did god-knows-what for the Falcon’s, his first love was numbers. He did the accounting for half the businesses in the burrow and all the magical ones. Moira rubbed her hands on her smock before removing it, hanging it on her hook, and then following Declan to the front sales shop.

To a No Maj, it would appear the two walked through a doorway that somehow seemed a bit too small for people to fit through. That’s because the doorway shrunk down to the size of a mousehole as soon as magical people walked through it from the workshop side, though the illusionary door remained. If a No Maj tried to open the door on the sales shop side, they’d seen a shallow supply closet. The spell was so old that there was still some of O’Connor’s grandfather’s Irish whiskey stocked in the illusionary closet.

Moira ducked her head out of habit before weaving through the crammed shelves. It still gave her a flare of pride to see her bundles of herbs and jars of medicines alongside O’Connor’s. His family had been apothecaries even before they came to America. Though she shuddered away from being called
his apprentice, it was an honor regardless.

They reached the very front of the shop.

“Hey, Mr. O’Connor,” Moira greeted. “What’s happening?”

Mr. O’Connor turned. His expression was serious, his mustache appearing to weigh heavily over his mouth. Moira felt a flicker of panic.

“Is something wrong?” Moira said. “Is someone sick? I can be ready for housecalls in a second if you need—“

“Moira, why are you bringing Goldbloods into my shop?”

Moira gasped. Even Declan looked a little taken aback at O’Connor’s use of slang.

“The MACUSA were here?” Moira said. Her thoughts were already flying. She could have all of her things out of the workshop in five minutes. If she used her brother’s Hopper, she could be out of the burrow in one minute. It wouldn’t be easy but—“

Heavy hands closed on her shoulders and Moira started. Despite his knitted brow, O’Connor’s eyes sparkled.

“There you are,” O’Connor said. “Now, before you take off flying, maybe I’ll clarify a bit.”

“Do so,” Declan said. O’Connor turned his head, his voice drying quickly.

“You have your books, Mr. Gerald. Why don’t you be on your way?”

“It concerns him too,” Moira said. When O’Connor gave her another look, Moira blushed. “Only if it was Newt Scamander that you saw. Otherwise he could be on his way.”

“Ouch,” Declan muttered, sharp enough that Moira knew he was actually hurt.

“No worries, Declan. It’s your lucky day.” O’Connor released Moira and stepped back. “It was that Scamander fellow alright. In the flesh. You were right about that coat of his. Very sharp.”

“Forget the coat,” Moira said. “What did he say?”

“Apparently, he needs food for his Kyrans.”

“What?” Declan said, thrown a bit.

“That was it,” O’Connor’s face darkened. “What else would he have been asking about?”

While Declan tried to deflect that question, Moira mused. His Kyrans, huh? She turned through their conversations in her mind. Was Scamander building some sort of trap to lure Kai into? That’s what hunters did, right? So she’d have to run to Shaughnessy’s next and give him a heads up. No Kyran feed would be bought to trap her best friend with.

“Hey, Moira.”

Moira looked up. “Yes, Mr. O’Connor.”

“I know you’re one to know your own business.” Mr. O’Connor scratched his head. “And God knows you’ve been nothing but cautious since Liam passed away...but I’ve seen a lot of
troublemakers in an’ out in my day. This Scamander guy doesn’t look like one.”

“That’s how he fools you,” Moira muttered, but even to herself she only sounded half convinced. True, maybe Newt wasn’t a bad person. But he was a hunter. A collector of creatures. And even if he had good intentions, even if he’d saved her life, she didn’t want him collecting Kai.

Not to even begin with Miss Goldstein. And Spirit Seals. And Falcons. She could already feel the headache brewing and it was all sorts of kaboodles that she wanted to avoid.

“You look scared, little Mo.”

When Moira said nothing, Mr. O’Connor sighed. “You know, people used to be afraid of the MACUSA here. Now, they’re afraid of the Falcons. No matter how it’s wrapped, fear hurts more than it helps.” When neither Declan nor Moira replied, Mr. O’Connor continued. “What was that thing Liam used to say, all the time? About fear. It was real pithy.”

“Don’t get scared, get smart,” Declan and Moira answered simultaneously.

Mr. O’Connor smiled. “Well, there it is. I sent that Scamander guy over to the general store. You could probably find him there.”

“And what am I supposed to do about that life lesson?” Moira said as she and Declan left the shop.

“Don’t be afraid, I guess,” Declan answered. He tucked O’Connor’s accounting notes into his bag, then stretched his arms over his head. “Not a bad day, though, considering how the weather’s been.”

“I can’t believe you’re not talking about him.”

“About who, my dear and sweet Moira?”

Moira rolled her eyes and said, “About Scamander.”

“What would I say?”

Moira just grunted and thrust her hands deeper into her pockets. On her shoulder, Kai nipped her ear and squawked a little. Moira waved it off and said, “The Goldbloods haven’t come back for me. Maybe they don’t need me anymore.”

“Maybe you’re just a baby.”

“Well, I never said—“ she stopped when Kai yanked on a lock of her hair. Moira pulled her hair away from Kai in one hand, continuing, “I never said to be the brave one here.”

“Huh. Last I checked, cowards didn’t break Spirit Seals on their own to save two people they don’t know.”

Moira was struck a bit dumb by that. She hadn’t thought of it that way, really. She’d been so scared during the ordeal, and when she woke up, and then trying to save Cait and this horrible waiting that had been the past twenty four hours, that she hadn’t really stopped to consider what she had achieved.

Declan yawned and at the next street corner, moved to turn while she continued straight on. He was heading over the Shaughnessy’s for his accounting books, which she already knew. So why did she feel an odd pang, watching him leave?
Declan smiled as he waved and said, “I’m just saying. Maybe it’s time you surprised the Goldbloods, huh?”

“Maybe,” Moira muttered. She turned on her heel and marched forward. In the street, kids were playing ball again. Once they saw her, a few of them came running up, and she saw Peter among them. He latched onto her legs and said,

“Moira! Moira, I saw him!”

“Saw who?” Moira said, but the other kids were rattling things to her too.

“...crashed a ball through a window, and Lucy had to—“

“So scary, I thought my ma’ would kill me—“

“And then the demiguise man just ran off like that!”

“Demiguise man?” Moira repeated. All the kids nodded. Lucy, on the fringe, lowered her eyes and shifted her weight. Moira noticed it. An odd chill went down her spine.

Kai squawked again and flapped his wings. The kids oohed and ahhed, but now Moira wasn’t distracted. She looked around. The streets were clearing out around her. Shades were falling. Doors slamming closed. A woman was reeling in her laundry as fast as she could, leaving one sweater to fall in the street.

“Hey kids,” Moira said, “I think it’s going to rain in the next five minutes. You should go into Mr. Greyston’s place for a break, huh?”

The kids groaned, but Peter held Moira’s eye. Moira nodded. Peter nodded back and said loudly, “Yeah, I’m sick of this game anyway! Let’s go inside, huh?”

The kids all followed. Lucy lingered back. Moira waited, until finally Lucy spun and said,

“Falcons coming. Going to Mr. Shaughnessy’s shop.”

“What’s going to happen?” Moira demanded but Lucy had already run off, her braids flying out behind her.

The street was dead by now. Everyone knew something was coming and it wasn't rain. Moira’s heart was beginning to speed up. Kai’s talons bit into her shoulder and then she found herself running back to the corner she’d parted ways from Declan. She slipped around it, swinging around a streetlight to maintain speed, and then plummeted down the next street to Shaughnessy’s.

The street of her destination was empty. The houses, shops, quiet. Moira skidded to a stop outside Shaughnessy’s, but it was closed and dark.

“Mr. Scamander!” Moira called, spinning. “Are you here?”

At first she only perceived her voice echoing, but then she heard something crash in one of the narrow alleys and she moved towards it cautiously, one hand palm-down to the ground while the other reached for her knife. Her senses felt like they were tingling with electricity. Before she knew it, she was beginning to see aura energies.

Only there was just one. A well meaning and familiar yellow aura crouched between two buildings. She ran after it.
“Mr. Scamander!”

She skidded to a stop in front of the alley. A few beams of light cut into it, enough that she could see
the shock of red hair, the flash of his eyes meeting her’s from where he crouched on the ground. One
of his slim hands was still pressed to the brick, which she now saw was covered in scorch marks.

“Moira?” Newt said. “What are you—“

Then the wall exploded.

Tina was beginning to sweat. Tock stared ahead, muttering to himself as the elevator descended.
Briefly, she considered if he was on some sort of medication for a condition she didn’t know of. In
which case, was it safe to be alone with—

The doors opened. Tock strode out. In this area of Records, all the reports from each Auror
assignment were kept. The shelves stretched far back into the shadows and loomed all the way up to
the inperceivable ceiling. His section of shelves was almost three times as wide as the other Aurors.
But of course it was! She forgot, because he looked so old now, but Tock was almost legendary in
the amount of cases he’d handeled and solved. He was around when her grandfather told stories of
the first instigation of Rappaport’s law.

She was glad she hadn't asked about the medication.

“Is it a very old case?” Tina asked.

Tock shook his head. His hand went to one of the fresher boxes and pulled it out. The files within
were dusty still. A spider crawled across the inside lid. He pulled out a case labeled only with a
number, meaning it was unsolved.

“I have very few unsolved ones,” Tock murmured. “But this one I remember. Four years ago, it was,
and it still doesn’t make sense. The MACUSA overhead said I was losing my touch, but I knew
something was off.”

Tina didn’t like where this was going. Was he going to connect his old cold case to her’s? Was she
going to have someone uncatchable in her midst?

She shook her head. Whatever information she found would help her catch the guy and that was
more important.

Tock opened the file. The dim light made his silver hair look full of dust.

“Here,” he said, handing her a page. “This is the scene.”

Tina took the paper. After gazing over the information on the back –Fishing plant warehouse, April
6th 1923, fourth district—she peered over the image. In it, she saw a large cement warehouse full of
windows, but almost no light made it in, for all the surfaces were covered in the same black slime as
she had already seen. These symbols were cruder, though, and more then a few dripped onto the
floors.

Tina looked up. Tock wordlessly handed her the next few photographs. One was larger, showing all
the walls covered in the symbols. Next, it was the floor. She gasped at the sight of another circle, but
also the body within it. It was in a similar position to what Moria had been in only this body was very much dead. The skin was blackened, dessicated, and the details so removed from their features that she couldn't tell if it was a man or woman.

Tina swallowed. “What happened here?”

Tock leaned against one of the stacks. Now, the lights caught on his glasses, whiteing out the frames and hiding his eyes.

“It was a situation not unlike the one you’re in now, Miss Goldstein,” Tock began. “No Maj’s goin’ missing left and right. Only this time, we were finding bodies. Or what was left of them, anyway. But never the killer doin’ it. Finally, we got a tip off. This young man walks straight into MACUSA and says he knows who’s doing the killings.”

“Who was he?”

“An untrained, unregistered wizard.”

“Untrained?”

“Yeah, never went to a wizarding school in America.” Mr. T rubbed his hear. “Immigrants, you know, sometimes they come in to the country as kids and don’t get into Iivermony. Wizard kids fall through the cracks. Used to be more common. I think someone made an inquiry...anyway, the untrained wizard said he knew who was running the murders and wanted to help. When we asked him why, he told us that the killer was after his family. We didn’t have any leads. Anyway, his tips led us to the bodies. I’ll never forget the sight of that. That was April 5th, 1923.”

He stopped for a moment. Tina waited. She knew, that the pictures were dated for the 6th. So that meant...

“What happened? Tina prompted.

“We got a call from the tipper sayin’ he would show us the last body spot. Said he wanted immunity and a reward for catchin’ the guy. I figured he’d probably lit out soon as he could. But instead of finding the operation, we found this.” He pointed to the picture showing the dead body. His voice softened. “And that’s where the evidence stopped. No one knew what the hell we were lookin’ at.”

Just as Tina had no idea what she’d looked at. The pictures seemed to grow heavier and heavier in her hands as she asked, “Didn’t you bring in experts?”

“Of course. They concluded it was old magic, probably, the kind that no one ever wrote down,” Tock shook his head, almost gnashing his teeth. “I never caught the guy, but at least No Maj’s stopped goin’ missing.”

Tina let the pieces fall into place in her head. If she was looking at an MO, and if she looked at recent events as an MO, the similarities were striking. But if it was the same guy, then where were the bodies?

What she needed was a tip off like Tock had found. Too bad Moira was probably in the wind at this point, a fact that Tina was just now realizing the gravity of.

“So,” Tina said slowly. “You think, this guy, the one who was doing these...killings, is striking again?”

“Looks that way.”
“What about the snitch you had? Do you think we could track him down again?”

Tock ran his hand over his mouth as his eyes fell to the photograph. Tina’s stomach dropped even before he pointed down to the photograph and said, “That’s the snitch, Miss Tina. Or what was left of him.”

At Tock’s touch, the picture shifted, going closer to the body, and even though the skin appeared suctioned onto the skull and the eyes were gone, the jaw was slung open like the victim had been crying in extreme pain when he died.

A shiver ran up her spine. Well, there was a lesson, then. Careful with the snitches.

She suddenly thought of Moira. How much the girl didn’t want to get involved with them. Her body crumpled at the center of the circle in so similar a way as the burned being in the photograph. But why hadn’t Moira been killed? How could she have broken the Seal on her own? And why?

“What was the tipper’s name?” Tina said. “We could track down the family, or someone that knew him?”

“We tried it, but couldn’t find ‘em. He was an immigrant, you know, and paperwork was a little scattered about his family’s wizard registration.”

Immigrant. That word just kept popping up wherever this case went. Suddenly, Tina’s heart began to pound. “But you got his name at least, right? A last name too?”

“Oh yeah, sure. I mean he came in anonymous but he told me...Byrne. Yeah, Liam Byrne. Apparently he had a sister, but no one ever tracked her down.”

“Mr. Scamander!” Moira screamed for what felt like the thousandth time. The magical shield around her body kept the smoke out of her eyes and lungs, and kept the falling, burning debris from hurting her, but it did not help her visibility. “Mr. Scamander! Are you here?”

The heat was unbearable. She couldn’t imagine what it would do to someone who wasn’t wearing a shield, and nausea was biting at her throat but she shoved it down.

He’d saved her life. She would save his. She repaid her debts.

She replayed these three thoughts over and over as she picked through the broken brick, the cracked ground, the burning garbage. Finally, she heard it. So slightly, like a baby bird. Her name. More reckless now, she bounded over the smoldering remains and finally saw the body crumbled on the ground.

“Mr. Scamander!” Moira cried as she rushed to the man’s side. Magic did pulse around his body, but it was weak. Burns marred his exposed arms, up the skin exposed by his tattered pants. The beautiful blue coat, oddly enough, was completely unharmed, and it was probably what had saved him.

Newt tried to open his eyes, but one was bruised shut. Blood seeped from his ears.

Moira couldn’t move for a second. She almost did vomit.

She looped an arm under Mr. Scamander and heaved. He cried out in pain and she almost let go on instinct but she steeled herself and hauled him up to standing. But God, he was heavy. She channeled more of her magic into her shield so it spread around him, but that meant less could be used to support his weight.

They crept to the front of the alley. Moira felt a bit like a snail trying to outrun a cheetah, but what was she running from? If anything, she realized, she should be careful of who she was moving towards.

One step at a time. Sweat burned her eyes, plastered her hair to her scalp. Newt's breathing was shallow and Moira tried to speed up but it felt like he was getting heavier and heavier.

Moira heard Kai screaming. She could make out his form darting above the smoke, the occasional flare of blue the only sign of him.

“Moira?” Newt said. “Where am I?”

“Just stay awake,” Moira ordered. “I can’t carry you if you’re unconscious.”

“I’m...being carried?”

Jesus, Moira thought. She was almost to the alley entrance, though, but her mind ran a blank. Where the hell was she supposed to go next? She could hardly drag him all the way to her shop. A hospital? Panic made her mouth dry. What if Falcon’s waited for her? Was this all part of their plan to capture her?

Newt groaned. Moira kept moving forward. There was no time for fear. And when she saw a single shape blocking her path, she bared her teeth and braced herself.

But she wasn’t ready for the figure to rush at her and grab Newt from her arms. She almost stumbled from the lack of weight. She caught a rough arm sleeve, looked up, and met Declan’s watering eyes.

“Grab Kai,” he ordered. Dazed, she whistled Kai into her arms, and once he was secured, Declan looped one arm around Newt and the other around Moira and they Apparated.

Tina’s head was buzzing as she climbed the stairs to her apartment. She had so much to tell Newt and Queenie that it was almost maddening to keep her mouth shut going up the stairs. Her thoughts were so loud that she almost missed on the sounds inside her apartment.

Almost.

Just outside her door, Tina froze. She heard thumps, Queenie crying out, then voices she didn’t recognize. Something heavy fell to the floor.

With a mighty burst of magic Tina kicked the door down and flew in, wand at the ready.

She was not prepared to see Newt laid out on the floor, covered in burns and groaning, and Queenie leaning over him to remove his coat. Nor was she prepared to see Gerald Declan bringing over wet towels, or Moira brewing something over their fireplace.

“Queenie?” Tina said, for lack of any other words. Then, her eyes fixed on Newt. “Dear God. What happened?”
Hope everyone is taking a breather after that chapter ^_^ Thanks for reading!
About Damn Time

Chapter Summary

During which Newt needs some help, and Moira and Declan are there to give it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tina dropped her coat on the ground and flew forward to kneel besides Newt. His pants were scorched with holes, and one of his shoes was missing completely. His head lolled over and his eyes opened. Or, one did. The other looked like a cat had scratched it.

“Tina,” he smiled, bleeding through his teeth. “I’m glad to see...see...”

“Stop talking,” Tina ordered. Her eyes scanned his body and she felt nauseous. “Good grief, Newt.”

“Half of those are scars,” Moira said in a matter of fact tone. She was bracing Newt’s right hand, then she went to work removing Newt’s shirt. If she was embarrassed about it, she didn’t show it. “If it wasn't for that coat of his, the explosion would've hit much worse.”

“Explosion?” Tina snapped, but then she couldn’t say anything because Moira had cut Newt’s shirt off. His right arm was all burned and blackened. Bruises and bleeding scrapes littered his pale chest. He smelled like smoke.

“Okay,” Moira said. She reached up, tied back her hair, and when her hands lowered they were gloved. “Okay. Everyone needs to calm down. Declan,” the young man snapped straight, his clear eyes on Moira. “I need you to boil up some water, and get the black vials labeled “burns” and ”skin grower” out of my coat.” A beat, then, “and the one for bones.”

Declan did it without speaking. He used magic to heat the water instantly.

“Tina,” Moira said. Tina blinked, slowly. Moira watched her a second before she said. “Go make us some tea, please?”

“Tea?! At a time like this? Are you insane?!“

Moira glared. “That’s not—“

“Look, I know some healing spells,” Tina’s eyes ghosted over Newt. Blood was seeping onto her carpet and his lips were so, so white. “Yeah, I can help. I can help heal him—“

“So can I!” Queenie crouched down. “I mean, I don’t have a ton of experience per say, but just tell me—“

Moira pressed down on Newt’s right side and he groaned. Tina gasped and Queenie said, “What does that mean, does that mean he—“

Moira’s head snapped up like a rattlesnake’s tail.
“If you want to help,” Moira said. “Then go make the damn tea.”

Pure rage fueled Tina then and she almost hauled off and hit Moira across the face. The movement was interrupted by Declan’s level voice.

“You’re really not going about this the right way, Moira.” Declan crouched down, offering the two bottles to Moira. Moira took them.

“I don’t have time to be polite about it. And he doesn’t either.”

Declan sighed and turned to Tina. “What Mo is trying to say is that your distress is distracting her from her work. She would rather you go occupy your thoughts elsewhere so that she can focus and help your friend—”

“See, I’ve cleaned his whole arm while you said all that shit,” Moira interrupted, but Declan’s words had cleared Tina’s head a little. She felt ashamed that she had been such a fluttering mess for the past minute. But the fear...it remained. It felt like her parents all over again.

Queenie wrapped her arms around Tina and said, “Let’s go into the kitchen.”

“I don’t want to leave him,” Tina said.

No one, not even Moira, argued with that. So Queenie left for the kitchen and Tina stayed by Newt’s side. She wanted to take his hand but it was braced. His chest rose and fell too fast.

“He needs a hospital,” Tina said.

“I can handle it,” Moira said.

The anger returned, sharp and piercing, and Tina wanted to scream. Where was Moira’s fear? The cracks? Didn’t she care that Newt was suffering? Why did she keep poking and prodding when he had no way to avoid the pain—

Then Newt’s eye opened, rolled over to Tina, and any anger left Tina’s body.

“Tina?” Newt said. “Are you still there?”

“Yes, Newt,” Tina leaned closer. She deemed it safe to touch his collarbone. “I’m here. Right beside you. And I’m not leaving.”

“Oh. That’s good.” Newt sighed and his eye closed. His body went limp.

“Newt!” Tina screamed.

Newt almost bolted up to a sitting and Moira shoved him back down.

“Don’t scare him like that!” Moira snapped. “You want him to have a heart attack?”

Tina’s breath scattered and she almost laughed. She kept her hand on his shoulder, some way of holding contact. Declan and Moira continued working. Occasionally Tina had to lean away so Declan could measure something, or tie bandages while Moira wrapped, or took Newt’s pulse. As time passed, the living room no longer smelled so much of blood and ash but of mint and something tangy that Tina couldn’t identify.

Tina had to admire their ease, the way the two kids worked while hardly speaking. It told of experience.
Sometimes, Newt’s eyes would open. He’d groan or try to move and Declan would restrain him. None of it unnerved Moira, who didn’t stop moving for even a second. Now that she wasn’t angry, Tina was impressed. It was like the girl never learned to flinch.

“Breathe,” Declan said. Tina took a deep breath, then when she saw Moira do the same, felt surprised.

“This isn’t that bad,” Moira said. “The soldiers were worse.”

“But you didn’t know them,” Declan said.

Moira’s lips tightened. “Pulse, please.”

In a few more minutes, the two had Newt’s chest, arm, and leg completely bandaged. All wounds were clean. Moira was applying some sort of salve over Newt’s eye—the bottle it came from literally said “eye” so who knew what was in it—and Declan sat back.

“Want me to draw the Trades?” he said.

Moira nodded. Declan reached out a hand, pointer finger extended, and began to trace a symbol on Newt’s chest. Glowing blue was left in its trail, until she saw something that resembled a rune.

“What will that do?” Tina said. When Moira didn’t respond, Declan did.

“It’ll help with the bruising on his ribs.” Declan drew another symbol on Newt’s arm. “This is originally what Trades were for. Healing when medicine was low.”

“Really?”

Declan nodded, and then changed the subject. “I can conjure more bandages, Mo, but the skin grower's running low.”

“I have some at my place,” Moira said. Her brows pulled together. “It’s probably not smart to go there and get ‘em.”

Declan looked at her. “You’ll be alright, then? For the night.”

“Yeah.” Moira met his gaze. “What about you?”

A tense silence stretched, then Declan smiled and rose.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” he said.

“Okay.” Moira kept watching him till he went out the door. Tina couldn’t quite read her expression, and then Moira put her head down and Tina couldn’t see her face at all.

Finally, with the last bandage in place, Moira sat back on her heels. She took off her gloves before rubbing the back of her hand across her sweaty forehead. She gave Newt another once over before nodding to herself.

“Tea’s done, then?” Moira said.

“I think Queenie’s got it,” Tina said.

The magic was working fast, Tina realized. Newt’s color was returning. His swollen eye was decreasing as she watched. Even his breathing had leveled. If he’d been fully clothed, she would
have thought him just asleep.

“Moira?” Tina said.

“Mm,” Moira shook her head. “Don’t thank me till he’s awake.”

“I’m sorry.”

Moira rubbed her jaw. “For what?”

“I’m sorry I yelled at you. It was a matter of trusting you, and I’m sorry I missed it.”

Moira sighed and leaned back against the fireplace. She crossed her arms, but it seemed more out of exhaustion than defense.

“That’s alright, miss Tina,” Moira said as her eyes closed. “Most people react like that when a person they love is hurt.”

“I should have trusted you.”

Moira laughed. “Miss Tina, you don’t know me. If I were you, I’d have been screamin’ too.” An exhale. “But I’m sorry I snapped at you.”

Tina didn’t know how to respond but Moira didn’t seem to be looking for one. It was like Tina was seeing her for the first time. Moira’s face was smudged with ash, and her thin dress was singed in some spots. Her trusty jacket, laid out next to her, was filthy and colorless. Even the soles on her huge boots were half melted.

“Were you injured?” Tina said.

“Nah.” The air around Moira seemed to shimmer, then she said, “Shields up, you know? Blocks bodily harm.”

Queenie came out then with the tray of tea. She handed one cup to Tina, and then floated another to Moira’s side.

“How is he?” Queenie asked.

“Resting,” Moira said. “He shouldn’t wake up till tomorrow, if I mixed my sedative right.”

“That’s good,” Queenie said. She had an odd look on her face as she regarded Moira. “And how’re you feeling, honey?”

Out of the corner of her eye, Tina saw Moira reach for a cup of tea. But then, almost without warning, Moira fell face down on the floor.

“Moira?” Tina said. Queenie went to the girl’s side and turned her over. Moira was completely limp, her mouth half-open and her arms falling down by her side.

“The poor thing’s exhausted,” Queenie said. “I think she just fainted.”

“You think?” Tina said. “Can’t you tell?”

Queenie bit her lip and shook her head. Her face paled slightly. “No. I can’t read her at all.”

Tina gaped. That was the first time—maybe one of the few times, but definitely the first time
someone so young kept Queenie out of her head. But Tina was frankly too exhausted to be shocked for long.

“I’ll put her in the guest room?” Queenie said.

“Yeah,” Tina said. “Can you clean her up a little? Maybe give her something to sleep in. Her clothes are filthy.”

“Kay,” Queenie nodded. She came to Tina’s side and kissed her sister’s forehead. At the simple touch Tina felt a rush of love and gratitude, too large to be conveyed through words. Queenie smiled. She understood, as she always did. Then she said, “Night,” and carried Moira to the guest bedroom.

Left alone with Newt, Tina sighed and ran her hands through her hair. The movement dislodged some hairpins. Tina began to tear the rest of them out, tossing them across the floor.

“Why do these things happen to you when I’m not there?” Tina mumbled at Newt. She threw another hairpin. “If I had been there, you might’ve been better off. But no, you had to go off on your own and do some exploring.”

It was like waiting for one of his letters, she realized. Sometimes the months would stretch so long in between that she thought he’d been eaten or injured and she would never have known.

Newt had his head turned away from her. The firelight shimmered over his pale skin. He felt miles away, somehow. She reached out and traced around his jaw. It was good, even if she saw his pulse, to feel it under her fingertips. So she knew he wasn’t a mirage. That he wasn’t going to disappear, and she’d be off chasing him again.

“I feel like this is going to happen a lot,” Tina murmured. “Where you’re going to go running after things and I’ll go running after you. I just hope my heart can take it.”

Of course, he didn’t respond. Tina yawned and stretched out right beside him. She fell asleep almost instantly.

The next morning found Tina waking with cricks all over her body. She almost didn’t want to open her eyes, knowing the sun would probably sear her vision. It was worth it, though, because when she opened her eyes, Newt was staring right back at her. For a moment in the quiet apartment they just looked at each other.

“Morning,” Newt finally said.

She smiled back. “How do you feel?”

“Better than I did a few hours ago.” Newt shifted. “How are you?”

Tina sat up. She vaguely registered the blanket falling from her shoulders. Someone had put a pillow under both their heads too. “So, it was an explosion, then?”

Newt nodded. He didn’t bother trying to sit up. His color was good and Tina realized his eyes and most of the shallower wounds had healed over night. She wondered how fast all of Moira’s treatments worked.

“How do you feel?” Tina asked again. “Be specific. Wait, I’ll go wake Moira, and—“
"No!"

Newt grabbed Tina's hand. Tina started back. She met his intent gaze, and read his own shock but also desperation. "Don't leave," he said. "Just for moment?"

"Okay," Tina said. She leaned forward and kissed his forehead, which was still a bit clammy. His grip tightened on her hand and she again wondered if his wounds were hurting him.

There was a light cough. Tina turned. Moira was leaning in the doorway. Tina felt an unreadable emotion, seeing Moira in some of her own old pajamas. They were lavender with little moons on them. Tina's mother had sewn them.

Moira approached. Her gravity-defying hair bounced a little with each step. "What pain are you in, Mr. Scamander?" she asked. "And where is it?"

"It's not that bad," Newt said. He didn't let go of Tina's hand. "Really. I feel much better then I did before."

"That's not saying much," Moira said. She began applying pressure to his various wounds. Newt didn't flinch until she pressed against his right leg, which had the worst damage.

Moira's eyes flickered. "You have an old wound here, Mr. Scamander?"

"Yes," Newt said. "And do call me Newt."

"A gunshot wound?"

"Ah, a dragon talon, actually."

Moira's startled expression was almost comical. "Oh. Great. I mean...anyway. You'll be fine. You won't lose feeling in any way, which is what I aimed for. And everything else seems to be healing fine. I just wish—" Moira cut herself off and looked away. She blinked fast and suddenly jumped up. But lightning fast, Tina caught Moira's hand.

"Don't leave, okay?" Tina said.

Moira bared her teeth and tried to pull away but Tina held tight.

"I thought you said you trusted me now," Moira said.

"I'll trust you to keep a promise," Tina said, holding Moira's gaze. "So promise me you won't leave."

The girl's eyes darkened and she gave a tense nod. "I'm just going on the roof. For Kai."

Tina let Moira go. Moira avoided looking at both of them as she went out the door. It closed heavily behind her.

"Glad to see you two are getting along better," Newt said. When Tina looked at him, he smiled up. "At least well enough that you both helped me."

It hit her in one crash. Tina's chest felt like it was going to fly apart, and she threw her arms around Newt and held tight. He made a sound like a pillow being squished too fast before attempting to hold her back.

"You don't scare me like that," Tina said. She drew back, held his gaze fiercely. "You hear me?
Never again.”

His eyes rounded and his lips parted in surprise. Then he looked guilty. Good, Tina thought. He should be. She moved in to hold him close again and he pressed his face into her neck, breathing her in.

“Tina,” he said, her name almost like a prayer. “I’d run after you too.”

She started back. “What?”

His eyes were glowing, soft. “You said you were always running after me.”

“You—you heard—“

“And I wish I could say that this sort of thing won’t happen again, but I like to keep my promises. So I might always be chasing something,” He shook his head, smiled. “But I’d run after you, too. So long as we meet up at some point, I think we’ll get along well enough.”

When had she started smiling? Because now she couldn’t stop. Her chest felt full of butterflies and her eyes were stinging.

“Yeah,” she said. “Well enough.”

She leaned in. She savored how his eyes widened, his pupils darkened, just before she pressed her lips to his.

And since it was a cruel, cruel world, something crashed into Tina’s head, throwing her off Newt. Something blue, feathery, and currently hissing.

“Kai!” Moira snapped. “We talked about this! When humans do that, it’s not an attack! Not only that, it’s poor manners.”

Kai was perched on Newt’s chest, his wings spread on either side like a sentry as he hissed at Tina.

Tina lifted an eyebrow. “You wanna fight, bird face? Hmm?”

Kai rolled his head like a wrestler cracking their neck. He hissed again as the feathers on his head rose.

“Incredible,” Newt looked amused. “What is he doing, Moira?”

“Huh?” Moira blinked. “I mean...I don’t know. He used to do it only when I was cold. Um, but now he does it when I’m...not feeling well?”

“He senses changes in your emotional and physical state,” Newt’s eyes widened. “It’s almost as if he’s developed an empathetic connection, the way mothers often do with their offspring.”

“Uh,” Moira said.
“The other thing I was wondering,” Newt started. He tried to push himself up. Tina pushed him back down.

“Thank you, Tina,” Newt said. “I was also wondering, Moira, how exactly did you get Kai? I know you didn’t steal him, but Kyrans don’t just show up out of nowhere. And did you train him, or did he sort of just—”

“You’re too injured to be asking questions,” Moira said. She untangled Kai from her neck. He obliged her, perching on her shoulder and settling his head on top of her’s. Moira hardly seemed to notice.

“I can cook something,” Moira offered. “If you two are...busy?”

Tina blushed, realizing that Moira must have seen them before. Newt swallowed and said, “Have you got a cane, or something?”

Moira found her coat and pulled a small piece of wood from one of the multiple inside pockets. With a few flicks of her wrist the piece of wood unfolded like a pocketknife, lengthening into a cane. She handed it to Newt. Together, she and Tina got Newt onto his feet. He tried to brace himself solely on the cane and near fell over. So the two women ended up helping him towards the large table. Despite it, Newt was grinning.

“Remarkable,” Newt said. “Besides my leg, I hardly feel a thing. What kind of medicine did you use?”

“My recipes,” Moira said. She was smiling, though, and if Tina wasn’t wrong, preening a little under the attention.

“I wish I had this in a few of my other creature encounters,” Newt said. “I’d be a better looking fellow that’s for sure.”

“I’ve seen worse,” Moira offered.

“Of course you have,” Tina rolled her eyes.

“It’s true,” Moira snapped back. "Durin’ the war, my mum would tend the soldiers that came home. My brother and I helped a lot.”

Tina stumbled for a second. Moira gave her a sharp look, while Newt paled a little, and Tina cursed herself but said nothing. They helped Newt to the table and sat him there. While Moira checked to see if any of his wounds opened, Tina sat across and stared Moira down. Newt’s eyes darted from Moira, who was grumbling under her breath while working, to Tina, who was glowering with questions.

Newt had the sudden desire to be in his case and out of the storm that was about to burst alive.

Finally, Tina said, “Look, Moira, I don’t really know how to go about this.”

Moira tensed. “What?”

“I know,” Tina took a deep breath. “I know what happened to your brother. To Liam.”

Moira’s hands frozen on Newt’s arm.

"What?" Moira said.
"I said-"
"What?"

"So I think it's about damn time," Tina rose. "That we cut the nonsense and get to it."

Declan watched as one of his oldest friends gazed out the window.

“It was unwise,” Declan said. “Such an act, in broad daylight? And you went after a Goldblood. One who is friend’s with an Auror at that.”

“Moira brought him in,” his friend said. “I blasted him out.”

Declan didn't like that reaction. It was too chaotic, too uncalculated compared to his friend's usual tactics. So that meant it had been someone else's idea. “So it all leads back to Moira then?”

Stormy eyes cut to Declan’s. “I knew it.”

Declan lifted an eyebrow. “Knew what, friend?”

“I knew you’d take her side. Knew you’d pick her over me. Just like he did.”

“It’s not about her or him,” Declan said. “It’s about you covering your ass. Before the MACUSA throw it in jail.”

“You should want such a thing, friend. Then you’d inherit all that I have.”

“I’m on your side, Markus. Always have been. And I don’t think prison would suit you.”

“Prison.” Markus grinned. “I’d welcome it. Then, the real show will start.”

“A show,” Declan repeated. Markus turned, giving Declan his back. Markus’ shoulders were not broad nor was he very tall. He had thick black hair that he greased back every day, and small risers in his shoes that were hand made in Italy.

“Gerald,” Markus said. “How is your little sister doing? Cait, I mean.”

“She’s well.”

“ Heard she came down in a bad way. But you didn’t ask me for help?”

“It wasn't necessary. She’s better now.”

“I see,” Markus lowered his head. “Thank you. That will be all.”

Declan nodded, unsettled as he turned for the door, but it opened before he could reach it. Six men he didn’t know poured in. They wore black masks, not Falcon gear. Declan automatically went to defend himself, but the men moved around him like he was no more than shadow. Or, the men moved like they were shadows.

Declan glanced back. His heart was racing. The men stopped behind Markus in a neat line. One of them stepped forward, and his voice was soft, almost silky, as he said, “We have prepared the cell. What of the girl?”
“Her time will come,” Markus said. He met Declan’s look, and all humor was gone. It was like staring into moonless sky. “And it will be soon.”

Refusing to show any reaction, Declan nodded and left the room. He strode down the hall, elegant with electric chandeliers and thick carpeting, then down the spiral staircase. Some of the younger Falcons were in the poolroom, while a few others were drinking already. They all waved to Declan as he passed. Declan could feel their happiness, their carefree thoughts, and he tried not to wish for the same thing.

Out on the quiet street, he could breathe deep. He was sweating. The men in dark masks were unknown to him. He couldn’t read their thoughts. Peering into their minds, he’d felt only an abysmal cold.

For certain, he needed to find Moira. And, if possible, not leave her side until Markus made his move.

Chapter End Notes

What's up everyone? Hope the week is treating you well :D
Coming up next we'll find out...where is Queenie? What is Markus' next move? And what will happen when Team Newt and Tina get together with Team Moira?
Thanks for the reads!
~lize steel
Moira’s blood felt cold under her skin. She must have paled, she thought. Tina was still looking at her, and the expression was like the small child trying to coax out a wounded dog. Well-meaning, but didn’t know what the hell she was doing.

“Moira?” Newt said, his voice soft. She realized her hands were still on him—no, she was actually gripping his shoulder. It probably hurt him. Her hands sprung back and fell into her lap.

Her mind raced. She knew this was coming. She wasn’t stupid. As an Auror, Tina would be thorough about her research into the Seals. She would know of prior instances in New York when Seals had been...when her brother...

“Moira, can you tell me,” Tina swallowed. “What happened to your brother?”

“He died.” Moira knew this for certain. She could tell that for certain.

“But do you know...how he died?”

“Markus.”

Tina’s expression tightened as she sank down into her chair. Moira felt odd, like her chest was full of cold air. Next to her, Newt was rapping his fingers against the table, his eyes flickering from Tina to Moira, back and forth nervous. Moira took that as him not knowing anything. It was comforting, to have someone who didn’t know. Who wouldn’t look at her with blame in their eyes.

“Tina,” Newt said. “What exactly are you talking about?”

“In MACUSA, I found a file,” Tina kept watching Moira. “An Auror Emeritus showed it to me. Dated April 6, 1923.”

Moira flinched. She couldn’t help it. Tina continued, though her voice was soft, coaxing. “The case was eerily similar to this one. No Maj’s were going missing by the handfuls, and their bodies were turning up all over the place. Panic bubbled over. There were no leads. Till a boy came to MACUSA and said he knew who the killer was.”

Moira’s heart stuttered before breaking into a sprint. She kept very still.

“But when the Auror went to meet with the boy, that boy was found in the center of a Seal.” Tina
took a deep breath. “And he was dead.”

Moira didn’t realize she’d shoved out of her chair until she had backed a few feet away. Her chest hurt and she rubbed her palm over her chest, finally diving for the two rings that hung around her neck. Holding them brought her some relief but very little. She had the absurd urge to reach for her knives.

Newt and Tina were standing now. Tina edged forward.

“He was your brother, wasn’t he?” Tina said. “The boy who came into MACUSA. He was your brother Liam.”

Moira’s skin felt hot. She realized magic was pooling in her palms. Despite that, neither Tina nor Newt drew their wands. If anything seeing the pity in their eyes was worse.

“Moira, I need you to tell me what you know,” Tina said. “We need to work together—“

“Together? Seriously?” Moira’s voice was too high. “If you saw that file then you know exactly what I’m afraid of happening! You askin’ me to help...are you insane? I mean do you have a death wish?”

Moira spun away when the two just stared at her. She wrapped her arms around herself and gazed at the cold fireplace. She was trembling, she knew.

She closed her eyes, took a few deep breaths, even then her throat still burned. it was happening again. It was all happening again.

Then a hand closed on her shoulder and the burn spread to her chest.

“Moira.” It was Newt’s voice now. Soothing, warm. “Helping you is not going to get us killed. Doing nothing will get a lot of people killed. Your brother wouldn’t want that, and neither do you.”

Moira’s eyes flew open. Stunned, she couldn’t move save to slide her eyes to the side and look at Newt. He was pale. Sweating, probably from standing when he was hurt. But his eyes were level on her’s—rare, not looking to the side or down—and he smiled.

His eyes were hazel, she thought. Liam’s eyes had been hazel in the sunlight. When he had smiled, his eyes crinkled a little just like Newt’s did.

Then Moira’s vision blurred and she turned away.

“I need to go and think,” Moira whispered. “Can I go...I’ll be on the roof.”

Moira didn’t wait for further permission. She simply removed one of the rings from her neck, dropped it on the ground, and fell through the portal that it opened in the floor.

On the roof Moira quickly realized she forgot her coat. The window sliced through her thin dress and leggings. She hadn’t registered her tears till they practically froze on her face.

But she couldn’t go down yet. The morning cold was welcome.

A screech and then something barreled into her back. Moira stumbled forward and almost tripped entirely when she heard a familiar chatter and then Kai was wrapped around her neck, his tail twisting around her waist and pulling her back to her feet.
Collecting herself, Moira peered around. “Kai, I’m fine. You don’t need to hold on so tight.”

Kai tucked his head under her chin and began to purr.

Moira drifted to the roof edge and peered out. The city was glowing despite the cold and the wind and the coming sunrise. She hadn’t really known electricity until she came to America. Now she had a hard time imagining a world without it.

With a shock, she realized Liam had told her just that. They’d been sitting on the rooftop of the apartment they’d shared. Liam had put his coat around her and peered over the city. She’d thought the lights had danced in his eyes. His face had been unscarred then.

“Can you imagine it?” Liam had said. “All those lights are people living their lives. And it’s only going to get brighter, you know.”

“You can’t see the stars here,” Moira had mumbled. But she’d held the blanket tighter around her and leaned into Liam’s warmth and Liam had obligingly put his arm around her.

“There’s more than the stars here, Moira,” Liam had said. “There’s a whole world here, just for us.”

Now alone on the rooftop, Moira buried her nose into Kai’s feathers and let herself sob quietly. Even though Kai was warm, the feeling wasn’t her brother’s arm. The dead didn’t dream.

“Can you help me?”

Moira screamed. In her haste she nearly pitched off the rooftop and Kai had to pull another tail yank to keep her up. Moira spun.

“Who in their right mind—“ but Moira froze.

Behind her stood a young man in ill-fitting clothes. His hair was in a rigid bowl cut, unflattering for his face. His edges shimmered like quartz dust. His eyes were open and sorrowful.

A spirit, she thought. A powerful one that could hold his own shape.

He drew closer. “Can you...can you see me?”

Moira nodded. Slowly, she drew away from the roof’s edge. Though his aura was fundamentally peaceful, she wasn’t going to take any chances. Her senses scanned him. She tasted metal, and when he drew closer, she saw the holes that pocked his body.

A spell-ridden death then.

“What are you doing here?” Moira asked.

“Waiting.” The boy twitched his head. “Then I heard you crying, and here I was.”

Moira felt a small part of her chest loosen. She sighed and stroked Kai’s head. His crown feathers fell back and he settled close to her again.

“Well, I’ll be here for a while,” Moira finally said. “So if you wanted privacy, you’ll have to leave.”

She moved back to sit on the roof’s edge.

The young man drew close to her. He shifted his weight—what would have once been weight—then
settled next to her on the ledge. Now she smelled wood varnish and dusty windows.

For a few minutes, they didn’t say anything. The young man didn’t seem to mind, peering over the city with a sad gleam in his eye. Moira surprised herself and spoke first.

“What’s your name?”

“Credence Barebone.”

Moira controlled her expression even as surprise set in. “I remember you.”

His shape flickered. Panic in his soft voice. “You do?”

“Yes. You were with that woman who always handed out leaflets. You fed some of my friends.”

Moira did remember him, though it was more difficult, like trying to remember how the shadow fell behind a tree.

“Oh. I thought...I thought you were going to say...”

He didn’t continue and Moira didn’t press. Well, verbally. Moira scanned Credence’s feelings. The obligatory cold sadness. Some rage, but most of it turned inward. So much self-hate.

More importantly, he was almost fully realized in shape, his eyes open and thoughtful, which meant he was fulfilling his task. Almost completed it.

He’d pass on soon, then.

“Are you waiting on something in particular?” Moira asked.

“I have to tell them.”

“Tell who what?”

“I have to thank them for trying. For trying to save me. It didn’t work, but they tried. No one else had tried before. I mean...not tried honestly. I had someone try, but he—he was just...”

Moira turned away. A few seconds later she heard the soft sob but didn’t look at him.

A small part of her ached to reach out and hold him, but the rest of her knew it was impossible. Spirits could touch her, but she couldn’t touch them.

“Maybe they’re the kind of people that don’t need thanks,” Moira said. She couldn’t help thinking of Newt. Maybe even Tina. “Maybe they just did good things because it was the right thing.”

“I still need to tell them,” Credence resolved. “It’s important to me.”

Credence faced forward. Moira did as well. She began to swing her feet so her heavy boots thumped against the building like a heartbeat.

His eyes flickered over. “The other spirits whisper about you.”

“Sure.”

“They say you’re some sort of...half dead creature.”

“I’m not half dead. I see the dead. Big difference.”
“They said I had to warn you.”

Moira stroked Kai’s head. “Of what?”

“There’s tremors. Someone’s trying to repeat what was done before.”

“The Seal, I know. I broke it.”

“There’s more.” A beat, then, “If it gets large enough, none of us can cross.”

The realization crashed over Moira then. Markus wasn’t just making one Seal, he was...Moira spun. “Where are they? Can you tell me?”

“Everywhere,” Credence shook his head. “The whole city, even. Can you stop that? Breaking one almost killed you. If he builds enough, we can’t cross. If we can’t cross, then we’ll—“

“Tear the city apart,” Moira said. “Yes, I’m aware.”

Credence nodded. “Then I’ll try to tell you where the Seals are. But it will take time.”

“How long?”

“A few days?”

“Are you bound to this spot?”

Credence shook his head. “But I have to stay here. To tell them.”

And we’re back where we started, Moira thought. She sighed and rose. “Please find that out for me. I can do what I can to help.”

Credence nodded. Moira surveyed the city one more time. She wondered how much brighter it would be in the future. Then again, she probably wouldn’t be around to see that.

“Credence?”

“Yes?”

“What do you want in return?”

His brows tightened “W-what?”

“For helping me. What do you want in return?”

When he just stared at her, Moira ran her hand through her hair. “Spirits don’t ask for things unless they want to make a trade. So, do you have anyone you want me to talk to? Do you want something put on your grave?”

“I don’t have a grave,” he said.

“Well shit, that’s just rude.”

Credence almost smiled. “I wonder about Modesty sometimes. She was my sister. I scared her pretty badly, and I can’t apologize to her now. Can you tell me if she’s alright?”

“Modesty Barebone,” Moira nodded. “Got it. So I’ll be back here in two days, okay?”
Credence rose. “Okay. It was nice speaking with you, Moira.”

“I’ll see you then,” Moira replied.

Credence gave her one long look before his eyes closed and he vanished.

Moira’s feet were going numb. But still, Moira looked at the stairs and didn’t want to go down yet. It was so quiet up here. She could sit there and imagine that the world had stopped again. Imagine that she hadn’t just had a full conversation with a spirit.

She heard the door open. Kai tensed, then without warning flew from her neck, leaving her exposed. Footsteps, slow, cautious, came up behind her.

Moira didn’t turn. Not even when she felt them sit, one on either side of her.

“You were right,” Moira said. “Liam wouldn’t want me to let people get hurt. He couldn’t stand by or hide.” Moira drew her knees up to her chest.

A hand brushed her shoulder. Moira lowered her chin to her chest. “It should have been me. I’m not brave, or strong. I’m not even nice most of the time. And everyone thinks I’m a freak.” Moira’s breath caught. “but I’m so tired of being scared all the time.”

Moira’s words ran out then.

“So you know what you need to do then?”

Moira bolted straight up and her head spun to the side. The eyes that gazed back at her were wide and dark, just like her own. Except over it was a shock of blonde hair and he was smiling, wide and toothy as he always did. Had.

“So you know what you need to do then?”

Moira bolted straight up and her head spun to the side. The eyes that gazed back at her were wide and dark, just like her own. Except over it was a shock of blonde hair and he was smiling, wide and toothy as he always did. Had.

“It sure takes you a long time to think, ‘Mo,” Liam’s spirit said. “Literally, forever.”

“You,” Moira said.

“Aye, me,” Liam reached out and brushed Moira’s hair back. A warm shock cascaded through her. His eyes softened. “You’ve grown stronger than you know, Moira.”

“You’re...not supposed...to be able...” Moira reached out, and when her fingertips touched her brother’s cheek, she flinched. “How can you be here?”

“We could” was all he said.

“We,” Moira repeated. Then, her head snapped to the other side. Sitting there, her elegant hands crossed on her lap, was a woman with hair as red as Moira’s. Her smile was gentle and small but strong all the same.

“Mum?” Moira said.

The woman nodded. She took one of Moira’s hand’s in both of her own. Her eyes lowered to linger on the two rings around her daughter’s neck. A silver tear ran down her cheek.

“There was so much she was going to tell you,” Liam said softly.

“I don’t resent you for that,” Moira said, honestly. “I’m just...I miss you both. A lot.”

Her mother leaned forward and pressed her forehead against Moira’s. Moira exhaled, closing her
eyes.

*I believe in you.* Moira heard the voice inside her head but knew it was her mother’s thoughts. Another hand, Liam’s, brushed over her back. *We believe in you.* Warmth wrapped around her, sturdy and sure, before she realized his coat had appeared on her.

No, not appeared. Moira turned her head. Behind her, Tina was retreating, both hands extended.

“You looked cold,” Tina said.

Moira’s head snapped from side to side, but no one sat on either side of her. She got to her feet and her legs were shaking. Instantly Tina lunged forward and hauled her off the ledge.

Moira could barely stand. She grabbed Tina’s shoulder for support.

“What is it?” Tina said. “What’s wrong? You’re...you’re freezing! Here, let’s get you inside.”

Moira was too weak to protest. She glanced back once, seeking the ledge, but it was quiet and empty.

But she could hear both their voices within her. *We believe in you.*

Back in the kitchen, Newt appeared to be gone. Tina sat Moira down on one of the living room chairs, then Summoned a cup of steaming hot chocolate. Moira wanted to take it but her hands shook too much. With a distressed sound Tina conjured a fire in the fire place, then wrapped a heavy afghan around Moira’s shoulders.

Moira gazed at the fire, feeling dazed but not necessarily lost.

“I'll leave this here for you,” Tina said, setting the hot chocolate aside. She hovered. “How are you feeling? Are you warming up?”

“Yes, thank you,” Moira whispered. She held the blanket tighter around herself.

“Are you sure?” Tina said.

Moira turned her head. Tina started a little, making Moira wonder what her expression looked like.

“I’m going to be fine,” Moira said. “And I will know where the Spirit Seals will be, and when Markus is going to strike.”

Tina gaped. Then she sank into the chair next to Moira.

“How?” Tina demanded. “How can you know those things?”

“I...uh...” Well, might as well. “A spirit told me.”

“A spirit,” Tina repeated. “You mean like a ghost?”

“Not exactly.” Moira shifted under the blanket. “Is there any reason a boy named Credence Barebone would be on your rooftop?”

Tina’s heart stopped.
“I mean, did he die here?” Moira said. “You would’ve heard about it, if he had, because it took a mad amount of spells to bring him down.”

Tina grabbed the hot chocolate she’d made for Moira and took a heavy drag of it. Moira’s eyes widened. “You did know him, then?”

Tina could manage a nod.

“Well,” Moira sat up a little. “That’s good. He told me that Markus is setting up more Seals. All over the city. He wants to make it so that no spirits can cross over. He’ll tap that power to do...whatever he wants, I guess. But in two days Credence is going to tell me where the Spirit Seals are, and then you can sic the MACUSAs on it. Or whatever Aurors do.”

“How...I mean...”

“It’s a trade,” Moira said. She made a scales motion. “He does this, and in return I find his sister Modesty and tell him how she’s doing. Not a bad trade at all.”

Now Tina just stared in silence.

“Do you need the blanket?” Moira asked. When Tina still said nothing, Moira fidgeted. Her eyes darted around the room. “Hey. Where’s Mr. Scamander?”

“In the case,” Tina said blankly.

Moira blinked. “Is that code for something?”

Tina started. After a moment, she smiled. She almost bounced out of the seat. “You haven’t seen it! I forgot. Hey, you should come down and see it. He’d love that.”

Moira narrowed her eyes. Miss Tina sure knew how to spring back. But deciding trust was the word of the day, Moira rose. She kept the blanket wrapped tightly around her. She followed Tina into the kitchen.

A beat up leather suit case sat on the floor. Kai sat on top of it, pecking at the lock.

Moira stopped. “He’s...in that case?”

Tina crouched down to open it. Kai obediently hopped away, watching Tina intently as she turned the locks and perhaps undid some spells. The case sprung open and some sort of roar poured out. Kai squeaked and flew back, landing on Moira’s shoulder. Moira had flung the blanket away and stumbled back.

“What was that?” Moira snapped.

“The Nundu, probably,” Tina replied.

Moira thought that word sounded familiar yet also exotic. She had no image to go with it. Tina glanced back with sparkling eyes.

“Wanna come in and see?”

Moira looked at her like she was mad. "People don't go into suitcases."

Tina then rose and stepped into the case. She continued stepping down. Moira had seen an illusionist once act like he was walking down stairs behind a heavy piece of furniture. It was like watching that,
only Tina was actually vanishing into the floor—the case. Halfway submerged, she glanced back.

“If it’s a comfort,” Tina said. “The case still surprises me sometimes.”

“Oddly I don’t find that comforting,” Moira said. But she did draw closer. Tina vanished completely and Moira peered down. She saw a wooden ladder, a rough wooden floor, and empty bird cages and a barrel full of some sort of feed.

The cages caught her eye. And Kai’s.

Tina looked up from the ground. Her expression grew serious.

“Moira, I know you don’t know him very well, but you can believe that Newt will not harm Kai. Or you. That’s the last thing we want.” When Moira said nothing, Tina added. “You have to trust us.”

Moira stepped down into the case.

When Moira came down the stairs, she was actually a bit disappointed. They appeared to be in some sort of work room, as small and cramped as a closet. Newt really needed to straighten, Moira thought, but at least it smelled nice. Earthy. Cages and bottles and rough wood. Kai stayed on her shoulder but nudged his beak at a bag hanging from the ceiling. Moira sniffed. Someone had just used some skin healer potions.

“Is this it?” Moira said.

Tina went to a door that Moira had missed. Her eyes practically glowed and without a word Tina opened the door and stepped out.

Now, Moira could be impressed.

It was huge. Like a ballroom. Only the walls were burlap, and there were sections of the world tucked up against each other. A savannah lay next to a forest, and the forest bordered on something that looked like a cave entrance and above was—Moira gasped—was something like the ocean, only it was square, but it gleamed like jewels. Grindlylows floated through the air with some other creatures that glowed.

The creatures, of course, she couldn’t name. She could only stare. Something like a jungle cat over there. Something like a rhinocerous over there. Birds but not. Bugs but far too large to be bugs.

If Peter could see this, Moira thought.

“What do you think?” Tina asked.

“This is what magic is meant for,” Moira replied.

Tina smiled and called for Newt. Moira jumped. Tina wove her way over a bridge—was there a stream running through the floor? How did he manage that?—and then she was in a sort of half forest area. Newt was in front of a spindly tree. On the tree were spindly green creatures. Moira recognized them from Peter’s book. Well, Newt’s book technically.

Newt turned. His color had improved. A small creature hung from his hand, squeaking and pointing at Kai. Kai was watching with predatory interest.

“Oh, Pickett, do you honestly think I’d let him get you?” Newt said to the green creature. The creature waved his arms and squeaked at Newt. Newt laughed.
“Are you...talking to him?” Moira said.

“Yes,” Newt answered. Then he seemed to actually see Moira and his entire face lit up. Or lit up more. “Moira, how are you? Can I show you something?”

“Sure,” Moira felt bemused.

Newt moved. His limp was weaker and Tina watched him just as carefully as Moira did. But It was like being in the case somehow made him stronger. Moira followed behind him. Tina was feeding little creatures with moon-wide eyes. A kneazle was stalking some bright pink bird creature. They all seemed happy.

“Did you make all of this?” Moira asked.

“Yes,” Newt said.

They were approaching the Savannah enclosure. Suddenly, Kai’s claws looped through the holes in Moira’s jacket and he began to tremble. Moira stopped and peered down on him. his head was almost buried under her collar but he could still peer out. His pupils had shrunk, something she’d never seen before. She wrapped her arms around him for comforting.

Moira followed his gaze, and that’s when she saw them.

They were perched high in a tree. The largest was jet black. The other two, though smaller, were just as brilliant and beautiful. They flew up into the air and circled over head.

“Oh my God,” Moira said. Kai screamed and buried closer to her chest. Moira held him closer. “It’s okay. I won’t let them hurt you, okay? It’s going to be fine.”

Kai blinked up at her, then faced forward. The other Kyrans had landed. She’d never seen such brilliant feathers before. The largest one was black and shimmery like a headstone, it’s eyes a peculiar black faceted with gold. The head tilted and Moira kept still, holding the gaze. The red one, with eyes of pure silver, made a cooing noise at her. Moira chirped back, then added a tongue roll for emphasis.

Kai made a noise, then, a high pitched chatter sound that Moira had never heard before. It went on for quite a bit, and she swore she saw the other Kyrans nod to each other before each one, in turn, lowered their heads to the ground. They extended their long, shimmery necks to point at her feet.

Kai made a bright noise. Moira called back,

“Uh, Mr. Scamander? What are they—“

“Incredible!” Then Newt was next to her, scribbling.

“What’s incredible?” Moira said.

“I don’t know, I’ve just never seen this before.”

Kai shivered in her arms and Moira placed him on the ground. Kai stood up, his long tail lashing behind him. The spikes were partially extended, scratching the floor a bit.

The other birds lifted their heads and Kai carefully approached. He opened his wings partly, revealing the lavender feathers at the base of his wings.

The other birds mimicked him. For a moment, none of them moved. Moira was afraid, because all
three of them were bigger than Kai, and if they attacked…

“This I know,” Newt said. He was still scribbling. “Kai is facing initiation into the pack.”

“Initiation?” Moira said. “What if they reject him?”

“They won’t,” Newt said.

“But they could.”

Kai turned his head and made a perplexed noise at Moira, and suddenly all the Kyrans were at her feet, cooing in distress. They flapped their wings. Moira didn’t know if she should be scared or not, because they were all huge—the largest’s head came up to her waist—but Newt wasn’t pulling her away or anything. He was writing like a demon.

Then Kai was back on her shoulder, his head pressed against her cheek, purring. The other three leaned against her legs and purred as well. All their bodies were warm.

“What’s—what’s happening?” Moira said. Her heart was racing faster then a mad horse.

“They sensed their flock mate in distress and are comforting you,” Newt said. “Incredible. I’ve only seen this happen once, and never with a human.”

“They think I’m a Kyran?” Moira said. She was almost embarrassed. “It’s my hair, isn’t it?”

Newt laughed. It was the first time she’d made him do that.

“It’s not the hair, no,” Newt said.

“Then why?”

Newt stopped writing a moment, looked at the ceiling, then at her.

“Honestly, I don’t really know.”

“Well, I guess that’s okay,” Moira tentatively reached down. The black one shoved her head into Moira’s palm and cooed. Moira smiled. “It’s more than okay.”

Newt made a noise. Moira looked up.

“She let’s you touch her head?” Newt said.

Moira’s hand snapped back. “Should I not?”

“No, it’s just...she doesn’t let me do that.”

Newt almost sounded sulky. Moira tried not to smile. "She?"

“Victoria.” Newt pointed with his quill. “And he’s Oliver, and she’s Carmen or Scarlet.”

“Oh.”

“Not that they know their names,” Newt rubbed his head. “Or respond to anything I tell them to do. And they ate all of their feed at once.”

“Did you put it in a box?”
“Yes,” Newt looked bewildered. “Should I not have?”

“If you try to hide it, they’ll try to find it,” Moira shrugged. “It’s like a game then. If you just have it in the bag out in the open, they’re not interested.”

“Really,” Newt wrote it down. “What about the head touching?”

"If they've known you long enough, they'd probably let you." Moira tried to remember early on with Kai. "Try keeping still, tilting your head to the side, and blinking at them a few times. I think that tells them you're okay."

Moira exhaled. She began to move to sit and the Kyrans took off into the air. Kai flew up with them. Moira felt a pang watching him circle above.

Newt sat down besides her.

“Okay,” Moira watched them. “So when Kai circles, it's because he hasn’t flown for a while. He doesn’t like being on the ground.”

“Yes.”

“I’m not sure why.”

“It probably has to do with the structure of their talons. They’re meant for aerial hunting, not walking.”

“Makes sense.”

Newt flipped to another page. “and I was also wondering about—“

Suddenly though Victoria dove down at them. Newt flinched. Moira did not. Instead of landing, Victoria dropped something right in front of Newt. Moira glanced over. It was a smooth rock.

Moira smiled. She remembered when she first got Kai. After a few weeks he’d start bringing her all sorts of small things. Rocks, leaves, trash. He’d brought her a diamond ring once that she’d had to hastily return to a disgruntled newlywed.

“That’s a gift,” Moira said before Newt could ask.

“For me?” Newt said.

“She dropped it in front of you, right?”

Newt’s eyes rounded and he picked up the rock, turning it around in his palm like it was a ruby. Moira went back to watching the Kyrans.

Once he was sure Moira was comfortable, Newt drifted back to Tina. Tina was currently feeding the Occamies. Softening his steps, he watched how she smiled at the little ones hat tried to cling to her fingers as she drew away. The light made her beautiful eyes dance. Thrums echoed through his body.

Then, she sensed him and turned.

“Well,” Newt said, “I think that went—“
He halted when Tina threw her arms around him. She smelled sharp and sweet at the same time and so warm. He wrapped his arms back around her and breathed deep. His leg was feeling much better, thanks to some of his own treatment, so standing there and holding her barely hurt at all.

"Is something wrong?" Newt finally asked.

"No, it’s fine," Tina drew back, smiling. Newt’s heart fluttered and he looked down before the blush spread too far.

"But thank you," Newt said. "For helping me with the creatures."

"It’s no trouble, Newt."

Newt nodded. He was having a hard time looking at Tina after the revelation he’d had the night before. He didn’t really know how to continue.

When Tina sighed, he looked up and was surprised to see something like anxiety in her expression.

"What is it?" Newt asked.

"Moira talks to spirits," Tina said. He hadn't expected her to say that.

"I thought we already knew that, what with the Seal and everything."

Tina grew even paler and Newt reached out and took her hand. "Tina, what’s wrong?"

"Moira said that—that the spirit of Credence is going to tell her where the Seals will be."

Newt considered himself a fairly liberal person. So, when someone said something that sounded like madness, he tried not to draw conclusions. It was proving a bit difficult here.

"Credence...how did she speak with him?"

"On our rooftop, apparently."

Newt felt a pang. He remembered the scrap of Obscurus drifting towards the sky. Could Credence be lingering so close?

"Well, we can use all the help we can get, I suppose." Newt said.

Tina squeezed his hand. "I guess."

They both watched Moira for a moment. Occasionally, one Kyran would swoop around and bring Moira a leaf, or a nut, and she was accruing quite a pile by her side.

"At the explosion," Newt said, suddenly, "Any evidence of a dragon was destroyed."

Tina almost growled from frustration. She went to move but Newt kept his grip on her hand. She didn’t seem to notice.

"It’s like every time we make progress, we hit a wall!" Tina snapped. "How am I supposed to report anything to Picquery if he keeps blowing up the evidence." Then, Tina’s eyes seized on Moira.

Newt knew where this was going. "She’s just trusting us, Tina. I don’t know..."

"She’s a witness," Tina said, her voice gentle. "She’ll have to be taken in sometime."
"I'm worried the president will pin it on her somehow," Newt explained. "Especially in light of everything you said about unregistered wizards."

Moira was laughing as the Kyrans swooped around her, the wind from their wings whisking her hair around her head.

"I think that’s a risk we have to take," Tina said. "She’s too valuable as a witness otherwise." A beat, then. "I wish she wasn’t, though."

Newt tapped his foot and crossed his arms, but he couldn’t see around the logic. Moira was a witness. He just didn’t want the president somehow scaring her off. He also didn’t want the president to make her cry. It might be ridiculous, but evidence showed that the president had an enormous ability to make people cry.

"Newt?"

He started from his thoughts. "What?"

"How’s your leg? And other injuries?"

"Better," Newt said. "Moiras treatment did most of the heavy work. I just touched up a little."

"She said she was going to get you more medicine," Tina said. She gave Newt a measuring look. "Does she not need to, now?"

"Oh, right. Of course." He moved forward. "Moira?"

Moira turned her head, grinning from ear to ear. "Yes, Mr. Scamander?"

The Kyrans instantly landed behind her, almost at attention. Newt smiled.

"I think it’s time we headed out. You have a lot of work to do, after all."

Moira rose. "Oh, right. Of course." Disappointment flickered over her features. Then, some panic. She turned and faced the Kyrans. After a second, she bowed her head. The birds bowed their head in return. Or, Kai didn’t. He tilted his head to the side and gave a confused chirp.

"It’s okay if you want to stay, Kai." Moira’s voice shook, though. "I won’t force you to leave your own kind."

Kai didn’t hesitate then. He darted across the ground, climbed up her legs and her torso and then sat right on top of her head.

When they climbed out, the apartment was already light from morning. Tina waved her wand and opened one of the windows to let in some cooler air. Tina noted that out of the case, Newt’s limp seemed worse. Moira noticed it as well. She said,

"I should probably be on my way then, to get your medicine." When Tina stepped forward, Moira waved her off. "I’ll be fine. I can actually protect myself, you know."

"I do know," Tina said.

Moira looked down and shifted her weight. "Well...good then. So I'll run back to my place and--there's something you're not telling me."

Tina and Newt exchanged a surprised look. Moira glanced up at them, then back down while she
stubbed her boot across the floor.

“I can see it in your auras.” Moira said. “They’re swarming with hidden intention. I'd rather you tell me.”

Tina realized now how much Moira had been holding back, and for what reason. Because she sounded like a crazy woman.

“Moira, we need to interview you officially,” Tina said. When Moira grimaced Tina added, “Not today, but soon. It’s necessary if we want to get MACUSA to help us.”

“We’ll need their help,” Moira said. It sounded like she was convincing herself. She shook her head. “If Marcus finds out I talked to MACUSA, it won’t end well. You know that.”

Tina saw Liam's body in her mind’s eye. She shook her head. “I won’t let that happen to you.”

“I know,” Moira said. “It just might happen anyway.”

Tina didn’t respond. Moira bobbed again and started towards the door when a small creature flew in through the open window and in a blink was lodged in her hair. Moira yelped and swiped out. The creature—a screech owl, Newt realized—scrambled to disentangle itself. Kai was screeching at it and flapping his wings.

The owl freed itself and flew in fast circles around the ceiling before landing on one of the chairs. It had no package, but Tina doubt its almost toy-sized frame could handle it. The owl's sharp eyebrows gave it a surprised, wide look.

“Cute,” Tina said.

The owl preened before zipping into the side room. Moira was rubbing her scalp and glaring at the door.

“He did that on purpose,” Moira muttered.

“The owl?” Tina said.

There was a clatter from the other room and then the door opened and Declan shuffled out. He was wrapped in a blanket. He blinked fast for a few minutes, twitching his bare shoulders.

“Sorry ‘bout that,” Declan said. “I was aimin' for the couch.”

Moira hmphed.

“Oh.” Tina said faintly. She was staring at Declan's shoulders. Across the back of them was a tattoo of stretched wings, and across his collarbones were Trade marks.

“I consider cute to be a compliment,” Declan said reasonably. Then, “I’m your escort home, Moira.”

“As I was just explaining to them,” Moira said. “I can take care of myself just fine.”

“Then you’re my escort,” Declan mock shivered. “This city just terrifies me, you know. Can’t walk anywhere by myself.”

Moira rolled her eyes but a smile was tucked in. “Well, I’m not walking around with you naked.”

“Owls can’t Apparate. So you’ll have to deal with it.”
Moira shook her head but if Tina wasn’t wrong the blush was creeping fast across her cheeks. She kept as much distance as she could between Declan and herself before touching his ear. With Kai glaring at Declan in suspicion, the three made quite a picture. Tina stifled her laugh.

"I left what medicine I had left in the guest room," Moira muttered, avoiding Tina's eyes. "And some instructions. I'll be back in the evenin'.'"

"Wait, when exactly-"

But the three Apparated before Tina could finish her question. Tina eyed the spot they had just stood, then peered out the window. The sky was clear and cold. It was approaching eight o'clock. If she Apparated now, she would still make it to work on time. But leaving Newt...

"Don't you need to go to work?" Newt asked.

Tina scanned him. "Will you be alright?"

"I think so," Newt shrugged. "I've been in worse shape and done well."

Tina faced him then. Newt, again, seemed to be avoiding her eyes. So she reached out and gave his shoulder a light push. Newt stumbled, but didn't fall, though his expression was mildly insulted.

"I said I'm well enough," Newt said.

"Just checking." And before he could lean away, Tina kissed him. He made a surprised noise, like someone inhaling oxygen after a long dive. It still felt too long since she'd kissed him, and Tina wound her fingers into his hair before she could stop herself. Still, she managed to lean back before his arm could pull her closer.

She straightened his coat a little, enjoying his dazed expression. "I'll see you for dinner, then." Tina smiled up to him. Newt barely nodded before she Apparated.

It took Newt a moment to realize he was still standing after his head stopped spinning. And after that moment, Newt realized that before dinner was lunch, and lunch meant a chance for what he’d been wanting to do for a while now.

It was just a matter of getting Tina to come back the apartment to be with him.
New Policies

Chapter Summary

Tina’s got a date with the President and Newt.

Chapter Notes

*distant screaming*...and that's all she wrote ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In her office, Tina pored over the reports from Tock again and again. Then she pored over her own notes, journals, ignoring how her words looked like a chicken tap danced across the paper.

She just had to connect it all together for a report. For anything.

Tina peered out the window near her office. It opened up to the lobby below were people teemed in and out. Out the actual window, the sky was storm grey. They were calling for rain.

She pulled out the other picture of Liam in the file. Someone had gone through the trouble of making it in color, which was unnerving since it was still a No Maj style picture. It appeared candid, like someone tailing took it. Liam was under a street lamp and staring up at the sky in thought. He had a handsome face, thick blonde hair, and eyes the same indeterminate shade as Moira’s. His mouth, with the downturned corners, also reminded her of Moira.

He had been about twenty when he died, and no one had come to claim his body. Tina wondered where Moira had been. If she had known. Tina flipped to the next page. Someone had gotten a sample of the dark slime that was covering the walls—even if no one could translate the symbols, they figured there might be some good in it—but the ingredients weren’t to any known potion. The list was especially long, including everything from fresh grass to Dementor’s skin to Bogarts nails to, Tina swallowed, human flesh from (at least) fifty different bodies.

Jesus. It was like something out of the medieval times. She could see why Tock found the spell near impossible to trace. Perhaps Moira would be able to say what it meant.

Tina leaned back in her chair, tapping her mouth with her fingers. So. Why did the killing stop with the death of Liam? MACUSA’s involvement would be obvious but Tina didn’t feel it in her gut. She ran her fingers over her hair and closed her eyes, visualizing the points connecting together. She saw faces easiest. So naturally, she saw Moira’s first. Unsmiling, exacting. Scared.

Moira had said Markus killed Liam, and that would make sense with the current situation. If Markus just wanted to grapple for power, then using an Ancient, unknown, omnipotent power would be the way to do it. Even with the MACUSA involved, they couldn’t stop what they didn’t understand.

Tina spun around in her chair, her toes tripping across the carpet.
Moira was Markus’ target. Now and then. Of that Tina had no doubt, but she could also frame it logically for a report. Moira could break Seals. Markus had wanted her dead because she could stop his plan, but Liam intervened for obvious reasons—the real question was why would Markus wait till now to attack again. Once Liam died, Moira would have been defenseless and grieving. He could have snatched her then. Why didn’t he?

It was a credit to her thoughts that it took her five minutes to realize someone was standing in front of her desk. Tina started. It was an assistant.

“The President would like to speak with you,” the assistant said in a flat voice. “In one hour.”

“Okay,” Tina said. The assistant nodded and walked off. Tina peeked over the file again, then found her eyes drawn back to the picture of Liam. She wondered what he was looking at.

She peered closer. In the picture, he wore a white undershirt with suspenders over it. A heavy coat draped over one arm. Dirt on his face, neck. Something peeped out from just under his collar. Tina magnified it. She saw a dark triangle, maybe the tip of a wing. Not unlike Declan’s.

Tina’s eyes widened.

*Go find another snitch.*

That was what Moira had said from the beginning. And that’s what her brother was, a snitch. He’d been a Falcon? Which meant he’d probably know Markus. Declan, too. When Tina did the math Declan might be closer in age to Liam, maybe. That was so obvious to her now, why Declan was so protective of Moira, why Moira seemed to know the Falcons, why they knew her—

Tina shook her head. It wasn’t about who was connected to who. She was getting wrapped in the human details too much.

Markus. Markus was doing this for some reason. What was his motive, besides power? In Tina’s experience, craving power was rarely just about power.

She was still pondering until the hour passed and Tina rose, journeying up the countless floors to the president’s office. Though considering it took up a whole floor, and contained the president’s personal library and a small apartment, Tina wasn’t sure if it could be called an office.

She journeyed through two receptionist desks before finally opening the massive, wooden door emblazoned with the MACUSA eagle.

“Madame President,” Tina bowed her head. President Picquery stood in front of the wall of windows, her elegant eyes sweeping the city below. The sunlight caught on the gold of her robes.

“Close the door behind you, Miss Goldstein,” the president said.

Tina did as she asked.


And waited.

After a few minutes, President Picquery said. “You must know why you are here, Miss Goldstein.”

“It’s about the case in the fourth No Maj district,” Tina said. She tried to keep her words from running over. “But do understand mam I am writing the report right now and was planning on
“Do you know why that case was given to you, miss Goldstein?”

Tina shut up. Caution rose. The president turned. Her expression was difficult to read.

“Because I want to prove myself,” Tina said. “And you wanted to challenge me.”

“No,” the president said.

Tina’s brows drew together. “I...I don’t understand, ‘mam.”

“The fourth No Maj district has been a problem for decades now.” The president tapped her fingers against the windowsill. “For one reason or another. Most of it can be traced to the increased immigration of uneducated or unassimilated witches and wizards to the area, which has led to the creation of gangs. These gangs have managed to practically ward the burrow against MACUSA, making it impossible to enforce magic containment laws.”

“I think that simplifies it a little—“

“Of course it does,” the president said. “But the fact remains that most of the troublemakers there are often immigrant or immigrant descended.”

“That seems...” Tina didn’t know what words to pick that weren’t insulting. “That doesn’t seem correct, ’mam.”

The president sighed. “Exactly, but that is what a politician would make of the situation. But you are not interested in politics, Miss Goldstein. That is why you are here. So,” the president sank into her chair, then regarded Tina. “I do not want this to become a fodder for anti-immigrant policies, or worse, some sort of war between the gangs and us. Do you understand?”

Tina nodded. “Of course, ‘mam. And I don’t think that is the case.”

“Then what is the case, miss Goldstein.”

Tina didn’t know where to begin, and with the president watching her with such a cool expression Tina suddenly felt gangly and sweaty.

“I was originally called to investigate the explosions,” Tina said. “I have found that the explosions are...well. I believe that they are a cover up, mam.”

“A cover up?”

“Yes. For the illegal ownership of a magical creature.”

The president’s eyes sparkled. “I take it Mr. Scamander has provided his expert opinion?”

“Yes mam. He believes it’s a Peruvian Vipertooth. Two of them.”

The president’s expression wavered. Her fingers stilled on the desk. “That’s the most dangerous kind, isn’t it?”

“To humans, mam, yes.”

“Then why bring a creature like that—”
“President Picquery,” Tina interrupted. “I believe this case is connected to one of Toc—Mr. Tocapanski’s unsolved cases from three or so years before this. If you remember—“

“The case with the black slime,” the president said. “And the circles and symbols. Tocapanski has so few unsolved ones, yet that case bothered him. I remember.”

“Yes. As you said the fourth is almost warded against us at this point so we can’t tell what magic is being used. The explosions are hiding the dragons. But the dragons, in turn, are a cover-up for another end goal.”

“And what is the end goal?”

“That’s where I’ve...well, ’mam, it seems to be the creation of something called a Spirit Seal.”

At those words, the president went as pale as Tock had. She straightened in her chair and leaned forward, her eyes flashing.

“A spirit seal,” the president repeated. “Are you sure?”

“You know...what that is?”

“Do you, miss Goldstein?”

The president’s eyes were spotlights. Tina felt trapped.

“I’ll finish my report,” Tina said. “Until then, I’m not sure I can explain it correctly.”

The president’s lips twitched. Her eyes cooled as she leaned back.

“Do that, Miss Golstein. By lunch time.”

Tina’s eyes flashed to the clock. That was two hours away. Only two.

The president nodded. “You are dismissed, miss Goldstein.”

By the time two hours passed, Tina sat back from her typewriter and sighed. Her fingers ached terribly. Her head hurt worse. And her heart was wavering.

She wrote the report without emotion, without trying to weigh on one side or another. But she was with Newt. The president knew something Tina did not, and that meant Moira could still be in some sort of danger. Her final page had requested protective custody of Moira. She doubted the girl would accept it but if things escalated—

“Quite a case then, Goldstein?”

Tina snapped to attention. Robert stood in front of her desk, leering down on her while his hands pressed into his pockets.

“Yeah. Difficult,” Tina said. She hoped her short answer would deter him. But not Robert. Normally his type went more after Queenie. Tina wasn’t settled as to why he was chasing her but didn’t want to dwell on it either. Especially now that he was shifting his weight and sucking air through his teeth.

“So, Miss Tina,” he said. “You got any plans for tonight?”

“What?” Tina said.
“Plans, you know. For dinner, I was thinking.” He flashed a smile. “Or hopin’, anyway.”

“Oh.” Tina almost asked if he had her confused with Queenie, then embarrassment set in. “No, thank you.”

His face fell and she did feel a twinge of pity.

“Oh,” he said. “Got plans already?”

Suddenly, Tina’s buzzer rang. Tina answered eagerly. “Yes?”

“Miss Goldstein,” the secretary rasped. “There’s a wizard here to see you.”

Robert was watching intently and Tina wished he’d leave. Tina swallowed. “Gotta a name for the wizard, Miss Smith?”

There was a bit of murmuring, then the voice was back, with a much nicer tone. “A Mr. Scamander, Miss Goldstein. He says he’s here to take you to lunch.”

If Tina had been blushing before, she had become a pile of embarrassment then. Well, embarrassment and excitement.

“Tell him I’ll be right down,” she responded. Then she started grabbing her coat. Fixed her hat.

Robert shifted his weight. He looked like someone had just spat on his shoes.


“Yeah,” Tina smiled. “You gotta book for him to autograph?”

Robert rolled his neck before turning and leaving her desk. Tina grinned to herself as she practically sprinted around the corner. Well, almost. She ran back to her desk and stared at the report.

She’d checked it over three times. It was ready. Tina sent a memo to an assistant to send the report before striding to the elevator.

She hoped Newt was planning a long lunch, because frankly her mind needed a break.

When she came out of the elevator, Newt was crouched down in front of a woman and small girl. Behind her mother’s skirt, the girl was watching him sign a book with eyes as bright as the moon. When he handed the book back the girl swooped it out of his hand before hiding behind her mother again. Newt rose. The mother was thanking Newt, probably, when Tina walked up to him.

Newt turned. His face was bright red as he rubbed the back of his head. When he saw Tina his arm froze mid rub.

“Oh, there you are,” Newt said.

“Signing books again?” Tina said. “Mr. famous author.”

“I’m not used to it yet, to be honest,” Newt smiled and shifted his weight. Tina was very aware of her co-workers swarming around her. In his scruffy boots and worn coat, Newt stuck out from the black and gold brass and stone.
“Here,” Tina said. “Let’s head out, huh?”

He nodded and offered her his arm. She blinked, then took it. The secretaries were already whispering as they left. Newt seemed unaware. Outside, he led her around the corner to an alley.

Tina stopped. This was the...

“Oh,” Newt said. He peered up and around. “This is where Jacob hit me with the suitcase. I can see why he was perturbed,” Newt glanced back and forth. “It’s not a pleasant spot. This is where you grabbed me too, isn’t it?”

“Newt?” Tina prompted. “Lunch?”

“Oh, yes.” Newt set his feet and then wrapped his arm around Tina’s waist and they Apparated too fast for Tina to even realize what was happening till it was over.

When they stilled his arm was the only thing keeping her from stumbling. She was not expecting to see her apartment when her vision cleared.

Tina glanced around. She didn’t smell food, or see anything out of place.

“Do we need to cook?” Tina asked, confused.

Newt shook his head. He went to the kitchen table and then set his case down on the floor. He opened it and went a few steps inside before he turned and offered her his hand.

If someone had told Tina a few years ago that a man obsessed with creatures would be having lunch with her in a suitcase, Tina would have called them mad.

Grinning, Tina took his hand and followed him down. But instead of going into the shed, they descended into a dimly lit, large room. While her eyes adjusted Tina held Newt’s hand tight. Newt waved his wand overhead. The lights lifted. She gasped. They appeared to be in a sort of private parlour, wall papered with rich turquoise and white. The floors were swirling hardwood. There were three windows. One showed the ocean, the other misty green hills, and the last rocky countryside.

In the center of the room stood an elegant round table set with white lace and silver. Over head hung a glittering chandelier without any cables, spinning gently like a mobile, casting small prisms across the floor and walls.

The food was already laid out on the table. The smell was heavenly, rich and dark like the room.

“Is it too much for lunch?” Newt asked, his brows drawing together. “I can change it. I had an idea about a conservatory—”

“Did you make all of this while I was at work?” Tina asked.

“To be honest, I’ve been working on it for a day or two. “ Newt waved his wand to the side and she realized a black piano stood in one of the dim corners. It began to play itself, a soft and whispering waltz.

Newt went to one of the chairs and pulled it out. Even with his ragged nails and bright coat, Newt somehow looked like a gentleman. And for some reason, Tina almost felt like crying. Instead she cleared her throat and swept across the room.

“I’m impressed, Mr. Scamander,” Tina said as she sank into the chair. Newt sat in the other chair. He
waved his wand and the two candles on the table came alive.

“I thought of going to a restaurant,” Newt said. “But I couldn’t find a spot I liked as much as this.”

Tina looked down on her food. Steak, salad, and mashed potatoes so buttery she thought she could just eat that by itself. The plate was bone thin and dotted with lavender flowers.

“It’s too much,” Newt said. She looked up to catch his panicked expression. “I knew it. Dougal kept giving me these sad looks while I was working on it, I should’ve—”

Tina grabbed Newt’s hand. “It’s beautiful, Newt. It’s grander than anything I could have expected. And to be honest, I needed to get away.”

Newt unfolded his napkin and put it in his lap. Vaguely amused, Tina did the same.

“Busy work day?” Newt said. Now Tina smiled.

“What?” Newt said but Tina just shook her head and said, “I met with the president today about my report.

Newt’s fork stopped halfway in his mouth. He said, “That’s a bit unnerving.”

“I think she’s on our side—I mean, she’s understanding of the complexity,” Tina began cutting her salad. “But she knows more about the Seals than I do. I’m sure of it.”

“But we have Moira,” Newt said. “The real expert.”

“I suppose. Though after writing my report, I’m worried about her too.” Tina reached into her pocket and brushed over the two papers she had in there. Finally, she drew one out. Newt looked at it and his eyes softened.

“Is this him?” Newt said. “Moira’s brother?”

“Liam Byrne,” Tina said. Newt looked down on it and his look grew sadder.

“He looks so young.”

“He was.”

Mr. Scamander’s eyes flickered and he pushed the picture back towards Tina who tucked it away. They continued to eat. It wasn’t an awkward silence, at least not for Tina, who couldn’t believe that steak could melt on her tongue like this, or that potatoes could be so smooth.

“Did you cook this?” Tina asked.

“Some of it,” Newt admitted. When Tina stopped chewing, Newt added. “But most of it was ordered.”

“From who?”

“That’s secret,” Newt said. Tina laughed.

“Okay.”

“I made the potatoes,” Newt threw in. “The potato doesn’t alarm me.”
Tina laughed again. “That’s a good thing.”

Newt watched her, his eyes bright with unsaid thoughts. Tina swallowed and tilted her head. "Something wrong?"

“No,” Newt looked to the side. “Candlelight suits you, that’s all.”

Tina smiled and kept eating. So did he.

It occurred to her that she didn’t really see him eat much. Even when he ate dinner with them, somehow it seemed like he kept his hands clasped together, or out of sight. Eating made him seem more...well, earth bound. He always seemed to be floating in some plane of ideas and dreams but of course that’s why she lov—

She stopped herself. What? What had she been thinking?

Her eyes flickered to Newt but he was still eating, maybe lost in his own thoughts as well. Relief coursed through Tina.

They conversed about other things while they ate, mostly not about Moira’s case.

“I knew when I went in that Ollivander would have me try wands till I found one,” Newt said. “I just didn’t know he’d let me almost blow up a whole bookshelf before I did. Mother was furious about it.”

“Really,” Tina felt amused, picturing a eleven year old Newt apologizing for blowing up a shelf.

“Of course later I went back to try and fix it,” Newt said. “But he already had.”

When they had finished eating, Newt asked, “Do you have a favorite dessert, Tina?”

“I like chocolate,” Tina said. “And lemon. Not together, of course. I can’t stand raspberries.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I never have. I don't really know why.”

“Okay,” Newt nodded. When he didn’t say anything else, Tina smiled.

“You forgot dessert, didn’t you?”

When Newt blushed Tina laughed again. At the sound Newt gave her an odd look. Tina almost asked what was going on when he suddenly rose and offered her his hand.

Tina looked from the offering to Newt’s face.

“Would you like to dance with me?” Newt asked.

“Would I?” Tina burst out before she could stop herself. Newt’s eyes sparkled but Tina looked down at her dark trousers, boots, and simple button up blouse.

“Not exactly dressed for it though,” Tina murmured.

“I don’t really have a preference about it,” Newt shrugged. “As long as you take my hand, I mean.”

Tina smiled, shy. “Okay.”
She took his hand and he swung her up and against him with surprising ease. His hand rested at her waist and she mirrored that light touch on his shoulder. Their eyes met.

“Do you do this much?” Tina asked.

His answer was stepping out and spinning them into a waltz. The piano grew just a shade stronger. Tina let her head fall back a little, feeling a bit dizzy. It felt so old fashioned. Classical. So Newt in a way.

She felt his gaze like a shivering touch. The air was a heated barrier between their bodies. Somehow, it felt different from when they kissed. To be so close, yet moving so fast.

He spun her out, back in to his chest and now his arm tightened on her waist just a little, enough that she pressed into him. Tina's eyes widened into his.

“Are you okay?” Newt whispered to her. Tina nodded. His steps became larger, the music grander, and Tina swore the chandelier was growing, the sparkling gold light shimmering around them. The light caught in the gold around his iris, across the freckles on his cheeks. The moment felt fragile. Tina’s skin was so alive it was almost painful.

The music slowed. So did they, except for Tina’s pulse. It was pounding under her skin, pounding against his.

He was flushed. Then, he leaned close, and his lips brushed her ear.

“I could be like this forever,” Newt whispered. “Just with you.”

Tina went stiff in his arms. Despite it, Newt still swayed with her, keeping his cheek pressed to her’s while she collected her thoughts.

“It’s almost too much,” Tina said. “I don’t know...or I can’t think...”

Newt drew back. He ducked his head just a little, then he brushed her hair behind her ear again.

Tina’s heart stopped. She might have been smiling but it was hard to tell when she could only see his face, his eyes, his mouth.

“I wish we had more time,” Newt murmured, his eyes dropping to her mouth. “All the time in the world.”

Tina’s throat went dry while the rest of her body felt on fire.

“Newt,” Tina finally said. Her voice was rough so she cleared her throat and said, “Look, I think I know where this is going. So, it’s okay...if we just...Dammit.” and Tina leaned forward and crushed her lips to his.

It turned hot instantly. His hands flattened against her back and slid up the thin fabric of her blouse, his callouses catching the fabric. Her heart echoed through her ears as she drew his lips apart so their tongues could meet, tangle. Heat against heat. He smelled like pine and tasted richer.

Tina felt herself drift back until her back hit the wall of the room but she barely registered the pain as Newt’s lips went around her jaw, sucking gently at her skin while his hands grasped her hips, pinning her back against the wall and them him against her. Tina grabbed his hair. There was so much of it, of him, and it was blurring her senses together till she was nothing but wanting.
She pulled at his waist coat. He helped her remove it. When her fingers went to the buttons of his shirt he didn’t even stop kissing her while she worked. At one point he did something clever to her ear and Tina almost fell down.

Then she could trace her fingers over the planes of his chest. Over his scars and soft skin.

“Tina,” Newt almost groaned. “Can I—“

“Please,” Tina said.

Newt’s fingers went to the front of her blouse and he drew back. The vulnerable edge in his eyes made her bone melt.

“Let me,” Tina said, pushing his fingers back. He withdrew, watching her, then his eyes dropped lower as if against his power. She worked the buttons slowly, for once happy that her blouse required so much to stay together because the more she worked the darker his eyes grew. He braced his hands on either side of her, surrounding her. His breath was warm on her collarbones. When she reached the bottom and her blouse drew apart he suddenly grabbed her into another kiss. If it could be called that. Tina thought of it more as a surrender—though she didn’t know who’s—as his hands cascaded over waist, up to her breasts and stars exploded in Tina’s mind at how his hands were gentle enough that she only wanted more from him. Tina slid his shirt off and then she was almost skin against skin with him. As Newt whispered her name over and over with each breath, Tina’s knees grew a little weaker. Then her feet weren’t on the floor at all.

Breathing fast, Tina looked up into Newt’s face.

“Your leg,” Tina almost protested, till she saw his eyes burning into her’s. Wanting flushed through Tina’s body. He didn’t have to say anything as he carried her to a discreet door, then into the shack where his bed was.

The sheets felt scratchy against Tina’s skin. She shifted, trying to get comfortable. The shack was hotter than she expected. And brighter.

He remained standing. He looked a bit lost.

Tina propped herself up on her elbows, then to her knees, till her face was level with his bare collarbones. While she could, her eyes took him in with more detail. His chest and arms were well-muscled without being intimidating, his skin dusted with tan, and she could see the scars she knew alongside scars she could only guess the origin of. She could already imagine kissing each one, running her tongue over the tense line of his shoulder.

“It’s not a pretty sight, with all the scars.”

Tina met Newt’s eyes. His slanted down her body, back up. “But yours is beautiful.”

“You haven’t seen all of it,” Tina said. Newt swallowed hard.

“I’d...like to. If you’ll let me.”

Let him? Tina had been wanting this for days now. Months. Years. She wound her hand behind his neck and kissed him. He kissed back but still his body was tense.

“Are you okay?” Tina asked. “Is this okay?”

“I don’t want to stop,” Newt almost hissed. His hands went to her waist, pressing deep into her skin
in a way that made her bow into his body. She kept her eyes on him.

“What do you want then?” Tina asked.

His hands flexed and her eyes blurred but she collected herself.

“Are you sure?” Tina said.

Newt gazed into her eyes. She held it. Finally, he let out a sharp breath and pressed his forehead against her’s. Tina smiled.

“It’s okay to be nervous."

“Not yet,” Newt said. “I want time to...do everything I can. If that’s okay with you.”

Tina kissed his cheek. When she wrapped her arms around him and he held her close, it was like the bed wasn’t even there anymore, and it was just the two of them pressed close enough that their hearts thrummed against each other.

Chapter End Notes

Hope the earlier update was worth it :) thanks for the reads!
When Declan whined for about the fortieth time, Moira snapped, “You didn’t *have* to come along, you know.”

“Do you walk this much everyday?” Declan gestured around. “No wonder you’re such a twig.”

“Shut up.”

After leaving the Goldstein home, Moira and Declan had Apparated back to Declan’s family home. There was a bit of chaotic explanation to a suspicious Jude—crazy healer girl shows up with naked son in the middle of the morning and *no* they weren’t up to anything—Declan insisted on following Moira to O’Connor’s. She needed a plethora of plants and herbs to replenish her stock.

But once they got to O’Connor’s, he’d sent her on a few errands that had popped up. And Declan had insisted on going with her on those.

Moira knew he was keeping an eye on her. Knew it probably meant he knew something she didn’t. But she didn’t know how to ask him without sounding like a snapping turtle.

“Can’t we stop for lunch, or something?” Declan finally said. He stretched his arms over his head.

“Where do you wanna stop that we don’t have to pay for?”

“I can handle that part,” Declan looped his arm through Moira’s to drag her towards a pub whose sign had just flipped to “open”. Moira recognized the familiar plated glass front, the sign with a hand-painted picture of a cat lazing in front of a roaring fire.

“Mr. James’ place?” Moira was surprised. “He doesn’t like Falcons in here.”

“He didn’t, ’til I saved him thousands on his ordering last year,” Declan flashed a smile. “Now he can seem to tolerate me.”

Moira sighed and let herself be dragged. She turned to Kai, who was on her shoulder, but the creature already seemed to guess. He flew up and over the building, landing on the awning. He began to groom his feathers.

Moira smiled. Kai had been a bit...sulky, maybe, since she’d taken him from Newt’s case, but he seemed to be getting better.

Inside, Mr. James place was dark and roomy and spotless. The hard cherry wood of the floors and bar gleamed. The glasses against the back shelf sparkled, and Mr. James stood there polishing still more as they came in.
His eyes narrowed on Declan.

“I don’t want any trouble in my shop,” he said.

“No trouble, sir,” Declan smiled. “Just want to take my friend here for food.”

Mr. James had a lined, narrow face and a frowning mouth. Simple glasses perched on the end of his beaky nose. His brown eyes flickered to Moira. For some reason Moira wanted to blush but she kept that under control.

“Ms. Byrne,” Mr. James said.

Moira bobbed her head, a bit cautious. “How’s the sleeping tonic working for your mother, Mr. James?”

“Fine.” Mr. James’ eyes darted between the two of them before he jerked his chin to the side. “Pick a seat. I don’t have time to seat you.”

The restaurant was empty. The two just scampered to one of the back booths. Moira slid in.

Declan shrugged out of his jacket. Moira watched him, till images of him without a shirt on entered her head. She promptly grabbed a menu. Declan folded up his coat and laid it by his side.

“I don’t get to come in here much.” He smiled. “It’s nice. Where’s the Apparatin’ room?”

“In the back,” Moira said. She snapped the menu up to cover her face.

“So, I noticed something on your rounds.”

Moira kept the menu up. “Sure you did, unless you were suddenly struck dumb and blind. I’ve heard miracles can happen.”

Declan laughed. “No, I mean you were asking people...about hiding places.”

“Well I couldn’t just—“ Moira glanced around, lowered her voice. “I couldn’t just ask someone where they would hide a dragon in the burrow. That’d attract attention.”

“Good point.”

Moira peeked around her menu. Declan was studying his. He ran his index finger back and forth between his mouth and ear, thinking. Moira wanted to ask him what he knew, as a Falcon, but also didn’t think...didn’t want to think that she’d be confusing his loyalties.

“What?” Declan said without looking at her.

“What?” Moira replied.

“I’m just surprised. A day ago you were scared to even talk to them again. And now you’re goin’ along with them.”

“You said I could trust them.”

“Sure but I know you don’t listen to me that much.” His eyes lifted. “What happened, Mo?”

Moira wanted to tell him. Declan had the sort of unshakable personality that she’d come to respect. But even he might not know how to swallow the—I saw the spirits of my dead family and they gave
me courage—message.

Declan waited. Moira knew he could sit like this in the quiet for an hour. It’d be torture. And she wanted to tell someone. With a sort of shock, she realized that besides him who else was she going to tell anyway?

Moira took a deep breath. “I saw my mam and Liam’s spirits.”

“When?” was Declan’s soft reply.

“Uh, this morning.”

Moira waited. Declan’s eyes were lowered, impossible to read, and the menu covered his mouth. She fought the urge to check his feet, see if they were twitching.

He knew about these things, she told herself. No use getting in a panic.

But panicking she was.

“And they told you to find the dragons?” Declan said.

“No, they just said...” Moira didn’t want to tell him exactly what they said. Those were her words to keep. “They told me I was strong. And that they believed—“ Moira’s throat closed up and she turned away, swallowing hard. “They said they believed in me. Then they left.”

She felt Declan’s silence as a weight pressing her shoulder, pinning her. Moira let her hair fall as a curtain between him and her, trying to control her emotions.

She had her arms crossed in front of her. She felt strummed tight enough to burst.

“Did they look okay?”

“What?” was all Moira could say.

“Liam, I mean. He didn’t seem...I don’t know. Angry?”

Moira looked at him. Declan was staring at his hands which were clasped tight on the table. His eyes were swimming with thought, his lips pressed closed. Then Moira realized he was about to start crying, and she didn’t even think as she reached out and set her hand on top of his.

“No, he wasn’t angry,” Moira said. “He wasn’t angry at me or you. Wasn’t resentful. I mean, he wasn’t apologizing either—“

“But when would he ever do that?”

Moira smiled now. “Exactly.”

A few tears fell from Declan’s eyes but he quickly brushed them away on his shoulder. Moira rubbed her thumb across his knuckles, feeling the scars on his skin. She waited for him to speak.

“Thanks for telling me,” Declan said. His eyes stayed to the side and more tears rose in them. “I’m glad. For you, for all of it.”

“Are you?” Moira wanted to reach out, brush his face, but just held his hand tighter. “I thought you might be scared. Or something.”
“Me, scared of you?” Declan looked at her and smiled. “Never.”

Moira couldn’t breathe, but it didn’t feel wrong. His eyes were a warm shock on her’s that she couldn’t look away from. A few tears sat on his cheeks. Now, she reached out to brush them away.

His hand closed over her wrist.

“Sorry.” Declan was still smiling. “If you touch me, I’ll just cry more.”

Moira felt like she’d pitched out of a dream. She yanked her hands back and pressed back against the booth.

With the timing of angels, Mr. James approached their table.

“Are you two going to order anytime soon?” Mr. James asked.

Moira couldn’t collect her thoughts. Declan answered.

“Hullo sir,” Declan said. “I’ll take a burger and some fries, that sort of thing. What d’you want, Mo?”

Moira was shocked. Declan’s face was clear, almost pleasant. Dry. It was like he’d never been crying at all. Where did he put it all?

“Miss?” James said.

“Right. Two pops and crisps.” And an ice bucket over my head. “Lots of crisps.”

“Okay,” Mr. James peered between the two of them and hid his smile. “Right out with that.”

And then he turned and left.

What the hell was that? Moira internally screamed.

“So,” Declan said. She dared a look at him. He was turning through a journal with business-like precision. He looked up and gave a good-natured grin. “We have to find dragons now, right?”

“Yeah.” Moira waited. But Declan was already looking back at his journal. Was he just going to let that moment go? “Are you okay?”

“Sure.” Declan made a note in his journal. Moira gave another internal, frustrated sigh before Declan exclaimed. “I knew it!”

“Knew what?” Moira said.

“I was working the books for Shaughnessy, right?” Declan turned his journal around to face her. Moira saw neat columns and way too many numbers. But one of his little sections was full of question marks.

“See,” Declan said. “That part is what he asked me to figure in as ‘renovations’. It’s a mad ton of money. But you see any renovations in Shaughnessy’s recently?”

“Nah,” Moira narrowed her eyes. “You cook the books for him?”

“Course not, I just take people’s word for things.” Declan shrugged. “Anyway, the explosion happened at Shaughnessy’s.”
“Explosions happened at lots of places.”

“But that one got Newt, and would’ve gotten you.”

Moira met his look. Declan lowered his chin, maintained eye contact. “I just have a hunch that we should check there. At Shaughnessy’s.”

Moira got the message. She nodded. “And while we’re there, we can look into the food for Scamander’s Kyrans.”

“He’s got Kyrans too?”

“Oh right, I didn’t tell you,” Moira grinned. “You won’t believe what that egg has in his suitcase.”

They were so busy talking that their drinks nearly popped them in the head. Moira caught her drink before it hit the floor and Declan intercepted his floating beverage before it hit the wall.

“No wait staff, huh,” Declan muttered.

Moira grinned and sipped her cola. It bubbled up her nose and almost made her sneeze.

It was all going pretty well, till there was a clammer from the back room.

Both Declan and Moira jumped out of their chairs and spun. Declan moved in front of Moira and Moira elbowed him back to her side.

But when the Apparate room door popped open, a familiar, gangly, blue-clad wizard stumbled out.

“Scamander?” Moira said. “What the hell, I mean…”

“Oh, good, Moira,” Newt strode forward, batting at his ears like something was floating by them. His hair was sticking up everywhere. “I need to talk to you about—“

“How’s your leg?” Moira demanded.

“About that,” Newt said. “Is there anyway it could be completely ready to go by tonight?”

“Why the rush?” Moira shook her head. “Scamander, it’s not a good idea to pressure wounds to fix, they get all—I mean it’s just—“

“You should help him.”

Moira looked at Declan. “What?”

Her friend was blushing, clearing his throat. “Just help the man, Moira.”

Declan had obviously read something from Newt’s mind, and the two guys were looking at each other with something like…Moira would say sympathy, and pity. Which she didn’t particularly like. Found annoying, really. She was about to read Newt’s aura when Mr. James cut in.

“Hey Mr. English. Outsiders gotta pay to use the portal.”

“Yes, of course,” Newt took out his wallet. “How much, sir?”

Mr. James’ eyes scanned over Newt’s singed coat, his scarred boots, and overall scruffy appearance. “Where you from, sir?”

Mr. James named the price, lower than what he normally gave outsiders but Moira wasn’t about to say that people Mr. James knew used the portal for free.

“So,” Newt turned to Moira. “The medicine, if you please?”

They ended up using Mr. James’ Apparate portal to get to the rooftops. Declan was explaining how Mr. James’ place was neutral turf, so it was the only place one could Apparate to in the burrow without the Falcon’s knowing.

“I thought Apparating on the turf meant you got turned to bits?” Newt said. He was straddling a narrow rooftop, and Declan amicably helped him across.

“Nah,” Declan answered. “It’s just that the Falcons will know. ‘Specially if you leave.”

“I see.” The two men walked behind Moira. Newt lowered his voice. “Are you a Legilimens, Declan?”

“Gerald, please. And no. Never trained as one. Never trained at all, you know. Don’t worry,” Declan’s eyes sparkled. “Your secret intentions are safe with me.”

In front of them, in the middle of an empty roof, Moira stopped.

“Here,” Moira said.

Newt moved forward but Declan held him back. At Newt’s questioning look he saw Declan smile with excitement.

“Don’t move,” he said. “Or you’ll be shredded.”

“Pardon?”

Moira drew her knives, one in each hand. She lifted one over her head while moving the other directly to the side, like hands on a clock striking nine. Then, simultaneously, she began inscribing different marks into the air. They glowed rose-gold in the air. Moira lowered both knives until their points met right in front of her.

Newt felt a cold wind blow back against him, a sudden burst of magic, and then the air rippled in front of Moira. Up and over.

And what was originally just a thick chimney turned into a chimney with a shack leaning against it.

Moira glanced back. Lights danced in her eyes. “Welcome to my place. Move fast, before the portal closes.”

Declan grabbed Newt’s elbow and urged him forward. Newt sensed when they passed the shield, like someone brushing fingers through his hair, and then he was in front of the shack.

There were crooked windows on either side, too smoky to see through. Light peeped through the wall slats. The door was no more than a thick square of cloth.

“This is where you live?” Newt asked.
Declan released Newt and went to Moira’s side. Moira had stopped in front of the doorway. She still held her knives.

“Someone’s inside,” Declan said and Moira already nodded. Moira lifted her voice.

“Get out now, before I smoke you out.”

Instantly a small form darted through the cloth. Moira and Declan started back as the boy fell down on his knees.

“Don’t shoot!” he said. “It’s me!”

“Peter?” Moira said. She made her knives vanish, crouched down. “What’s wrong?”

“It’s Cassie!” The boy almost sounded hysterical. “She’s bleeding everywhere! And I said let’s go find Moira, but you weren’t here, so I did what I could and now she’s passed out—”

“Whoa whoa,” Moira grabbed Peter’s chin, lifted it. “Calm down. Where is she?”

“In the house,” Peter answered. He began to cry. “I tried to help her, Moira, I tried, but I think—“

Moira rose and pulled back the cloth and went inside. Newt sensed he wasn’t invited in. Declan moved in front of Peter, who was still shivering.

“Hey big man,” Declan said. “It’s going to be fine. She’s here now.”

“I hate blood,” Peter said. “It’s so gross and sticky.”

“Sure it is. If blood was pretty, it wouldn’t be bad if we bled.”

Peter took a deep breath, swallowing Declan’s words like water, and then his eyes went to Newt. “Who’s that—wait! Demiguise man!”

Newt smiled. “Hello there. So you’re Peter, then?”

“Sure am.” Peter rubbed his eyes on his sleeves, his nose too, and puffed his chest. “What’s your name?”

“Newt Scamander.”

Peter’s mouth dropped open. He stared. Then, he said, “No feckin’ way.”

“Language,” Declan said.

The door pulled back. Moira peered out. “Peter, you can come in now. I don’t know if all of us will fit in here.”

But Peter didn’t move. Moira’s eyes darted from him to Newt, and Moira smirked.

“You met my friend then, Peter?”

“You’re friends with him? “ Peter jumped up and ran into the house. Newt heard some clattering, Moira’s sharp retort, and Newt drifted towards the door.

Not a home, really, he thought, peering in. A workshop. Heavy wooden counters lined two sides, one at waist level, the other higher. Their surfaces were covered half in plants—most in pots were on
The sill—while the other half was arranged with tools and a mini-cauldron. Moira stood in front of it while Peter was ducked under the counter, searching for something.

The back wall was lined with bottles. A chair leg was rigged as a perch, probably for Kai. Herbs dried, hanging from the ceiling.

Dusty pillows were stacked on one side, on which sat a girl maybe Peter’s age. Her legs were lined with dirty bandages, her arm freshly splinted. She watched Newt curiously.

“Where is it...?” Peter mumbled. “It’s gotta be—“

Peter pulled out a dirty box and Moira said, sharp, “Not there, Peter.”

“Right,” Peter set the box aside and then he turned to Newt, grinning. “I have your book, Mr. Scamander. I know you signed it but would you mind...”

“Sure,” Newt leaned against the doorway. “So, this is where you work, Moira?”

Moira’s eyes closed off. She said, “Peter, your book might be in the apartment.”

“Can we check there?” Peter said.

“Might as well.” Moira rolled her wrist and the cauldron stilled. “God knows we don’t all fit in here.”

While Moira helped the girl, Cassie, to her feet, Peter bopped over to stand in front of Newt.

“Golly you’re tall,” Peter said. Then, “Why are Demiguises invisible? Is it so they can hunt?”

“Well not exactly—“

“And do you know about Hidebehinds? Have you ever seen one? And if you don’t have a wand, how do you ridi-ridi—fight a Boggart?”

Moira led them out of the shed and towards what looked like a rounded skylight. She opened it like a hatch, and then climbed down the ladder. She helped Cassie down, then Peter, then Newt, with Declan coming in the rear.

When Newt climbed down, he was submerged in leaves and branches. It was like descending into a forest. The air smelled like rain.

When he touched the ground, he was surprised that it was stone. The room was lit up like a greenhouse. The edges of it were obscured, lined with bushes, vines, and trees. Each was labeled with a neat placard. Smaller patches of herbs grew in squares surrounded by narrow stone paths. In the center of the room, where he followed the others to, was a large open space. It had two long, weathered wooden tables. Both were lined with more tools, each had a cauldron, and then to the side were two sitting chairs and a rickety stool.

Moira waved the stool over and set Cassie on it. Peter was still fluttering around Newt. Newt tried to answer as many questions as he could, but at times he almost wanted to write a few of Peter’s down because he honestly didn’t know the answer.

Finally, Moira said, “Let the man breathe, Peter. Go find your book.”

Peter scampered off, past where Newt could see.
“Sorry about that,” Moira said. She was lifting the bandages on Cassie’s legs, cleaning them. “He’s excitable.”

“Worse things could happen,” Newt said. “I’m sorry, but did you build all of this? The trees and all I mean.”

“Liam helped me, but I maintain it.” Moira answered in a matter-of-fact way.

“How?”

“It’s hard to explain,” was all Moira said.

Newt sat in one of the chairs. Above, he saw a vine creeping across the ceiling. It was approaching a tree bearing some sort of fruit. As he watched, the tree’s branch smacked the vine away.

“Will they be okay?” Cassie asked Moira. “M’legs, I mean? They won’t...rot off?”

“Who said anything ‘bout them rotting off?” Moira said. She was rubbing salve on the wounds.

“M’unc, in the war, he had a leg rot off.”

“Well, I’ve seen some rotten legs in my time,” Moira nodded seriously. “I think you’ll be fine, Miss Cassie.”

“Okay.” Cassie tilted her head. “You married, miss Moira?”

“Nope.”

Newt noticed that Declan had paused in flipping through some sort of journal.

Cassie said, “Aren’t you kind old to not be?”

“I don’t think so,” Moira moved back. “Try walking, see if they fall off.” When Cassie squeaked Moira added, “The bandages, I mean. To make sure they’re secure.”

“You talk fancy,” Cassie said, then she hopped off the table and walked around. She gasped. “They don’ hurt! How you do that? How?”

“Magic,” Moira said.

“I love it,” Cassie replied.

To Declan, Newt said, “Cassie’s a muggle?”

“Yeah.” Declan marked a page. It looked like a map.

Newt looked back to see Moira handing Cassie a small package. “Take this to your ‘mam okay? Reapply tomorrow morning with the new bandages in there.”

“Before work?”

The girl was less than ten. Moira’s eyes saddened. “Yeah, before you go to work.”

“Okay.” Cassie nodded. She handed Moira something. Moira stared at it.

“It’s some glass work,” Cassie said, embarrassed. “From m’ da. We don’t really have a way to pay you yet, but if ya sell that, you can—“
“It’s a fair trade,” Moira said. Cassie smiled back. Then, Moira had Peter show Cassie out.

Moira approached to two guys. In her hand was something like the top of a snow globe, only the snow was frozen around an icy looking red flower. Moira held it up to the light and it sparkled.

“You should keep that,” Declan said, almost mesmerized. “Man, even muggles make pretty things sometimes.”

Moira nodded. She set the glass on the corner of her worktable before she said. “Now you, Mr. Scamander.”

“What?” Newt said.

“The stool. On you hop.”

“Uh,” Newt glanced around. “Shouldn’t we go somewhere...private?”

“It’s your shin,” Moira rolled her wrist, tapped the stool three times, splayed her hand, and the stool shaped into a makeshift gurney. “You’re not that much of a prude, are you?”

Newt blushed but decided it was unavoidable. He lifted himself onto the gurney. It creaked, alarming him, but when he thought about it, he’d been in odder places. There was that one time with the doctor who wanted to draw out infection with a lamb’s heart, and there was that one time in China where—

Moira snipped off the bottom of his pants leg.

“Oi!” Newt said, despite himself.

“You’re a wand hand,” Moira shrugged. “You can fix a pair of pants, right?”

“Yes, but let me know next time when you’re going to be cutting things.”

Moira rolled her eyes. She pulled another stool out from under the table and sat.

“Your wounds looking fine as is,” Moira said. “But I can make it heal faster. It might hurt.”

“That’s fine,” Newt said.

Moira pulled a few jars and then unwrapped bandages. A bowl of hot water appeared by her side. When she set the medicine on his skin, it felt like someone had stabbed his leg. Newt gasped, but then bit down his voice.

“Told you,” Moira said quietly. Then, “So I take it Miss Tina’s at work?”

“Oh yes. She’s well.” Newt breathed hard through his teeth. The pain began to subside; enough that Newt swore Declan was snickering to the side. Thankfully Peter rushed over. He had a book in his hands. If Newt being on a gurney, mildly in pain, alarmed him he didn’t show it.

Peter pushed the book over Newt’s nose. “Can you sign it?”

Newt took the book and held it up over his head. Some dirt fell on his face. The cover seemed even more worn then the last time he’d seen it, and the pages were dog-eared. Curious, he opened one of the pages. It was the Crimson Fireball. The image was crowded with scrawled questions like Why only in crimson? Why are the teeth like that? Can it eat lettuce?
Then a pen floated over his nose. Newt took it and went to the back cover. He wrote his note, signed it, then handed it back. Peter was hopping from foot to foot as he clenched the book to his chest. He was about to open his mouth, then he shut it, and sank down on the floor by Moira’s feet.

At Newt’s confused look, Peter said, “I can’t ask questions to the gurney bound. Moira’s rules.”

Newt was about to reply when there was a loud banging sound from above. Everyone looked up. Moira narrowed her eyes.

“That’s the skylight.”

“I’ll get it,” Declan said, setting aside the journal. He scampered up the ladder, and then opened the hatch. And was knocked off the ladder by four creatures flying in with a burst of color.

Not just any colors. Blue, red, black, and green.

“Merlin’s beard!” Newt cried as the Kyrans circled overhead. Moira leapt up as well and made a harsh whistling sound. Kai flew down into Moira’s arms, while the other three made a beeline for Newt. Newt covered his face on instinct as he felt the rush of feathered wind, before he felt heavy weights settle on his body.

He lowered his arms to see Victoria’s head only inches away from his. Her eyes watched him with acute concentration.

“Hello,” Newt said. Victoria tilted her head.

Newt peered behind her. The other Kyrans were sitting on him. Oliver was hissing at his wounded leg, while Scarlet was waddling in circles.

Newt looked back at Victoria. He thought of Moira, and keeping his voice calm, said “I’m fine, Victoria. I’m okay.”

Victoria head butted him and squawked. She didn’t move. Newt felt a rush of pure joy. Were they worried about him? How wonderful! What progress! Except...

“How did you all get out? “ Newt began to panic. “Someone could have seen you!”

Victoria cawed, and then on top of her head appeared a familiar green figure.

“I should have known,” Newt muttered as Pickett leapt from Victoria’s head to Newt’s collar. Pickett squeaked, waving his arms overhead.

“Kyrans!” Peter cried. “And... is that a Bowtruckle?”

At Peter’s voice the three Kyrans bounded into flight, landing in the various trees overhead. Pickett, still on Newt, hid behind Newt’s shirt collar.

“I told you not to lock things,” Moira said. Kai was on her shoulder, picking at her hair. “It’s all a game, then.”

“They’ve never broken out before,” Newt’s head spun. “This could have been a disaster. They could have been hurt, or seen.”

“They probably weren’t,” Moira said. Then she went back to working on his leg like nothing had changed. Kai flew up to join the other Kyrans just as Declan approached from the side, rubbing his head and back. To himself he muttered, “Are you alright, Declan? You fell! You could’ve been hurt,
but thank you so much...”

“I’m sure you’re fine,” Moira retorted.

Peter hovered by Newt’s side, his eyes latched onto the man’s collar. Pickett slowly crept out. Seeing Peter, though, he squeaked and hid again.

“Sorry!” Peter started back. “He’s scared of me.”

“You’re a stranger and a giant,” Newt replied. But he did look at Pickett and say, “He’s a friend, Pickett. It’s okay.”

Newt laid his hand besides Pickett, but Pickett just climbed over it and continued his journey up Newt’s neck, face, till he was submerged in Newt’s hair. Peter kept watching with pure awe.

Declan sank back into his chair with a long sigh. “I hope, when we’re looking for the dragon, you’ll take a bit more concern for my safety.”

“Oh shut it,” Moira said. “It’s not like you’re some mewling maiden.”

“I could be,” Declan seemed entertained by the idea. “I bet I could work up a good mewl, if I wanted to.”

“Don’t try it or I’ll punch you.”

“Are they always like this?” Peter said to Newt. Newt shrugged. He did seem to notice some extra bite in Moira’s tone with Declan. But Declan seemed to enjoy it.

Ah, Newt thought. Young love.

Which made him think of Tina. Which made him smile, tilt his head back, and remember her joy in the case with him. Remember feeling her pressed against him as they danced, as he kissed her—but nope. Not that route. Or he’d need Moira to pour ice over his head.

He hoped his leg would heal damn soon.

And back to that, Moira said, “Done.”

Newt’s head popped up. “Really?”

“Sure. Walk on it.”

Newt raised himself, swung his legs around, and put weight on it. He gasped. Not only was there no pain, there was no muscle loss. If anything, his leg felt stronger.

“Incredible,” he said.

“Here,” Moira pushed a clay jar over. “Here’s the rest for your other cuts and stuff. Reapply it, and you should be good for tonight. Whatever you need it for.”

Newt took the jar. But then he remembered Cassie, and said, “How much do I owe you?”

Moira was recording things in her beaten-up journal, but his words made her look up in surprise.

“What?”
“You’ve done a lot to help me,” Newt smiled. “And this is how you make your living. So how much do I owe you?”

Moira looked at Declan. Declan gave a hapless shrug.

“Do you have American money?” Moira asked.

When he nodded, she named a price that was a little higher than he expected, but not by much, then she said, “And one day, you’re going to take Peter into your suitcase.”

Newt grinned. “Deal.”

“Suitcase?” Peter straightened. “Is he taking me somewhere?”

“It’s a surprise,” Moira said before Newt opened his mouth. Newt nodded.

Peter lit up. “I like your surprises.”

Then, he ran to the front door and left.

“Where’s he—“

“Who knows,” Moira shrugged. “Probably to check on Cassie. Or throw rocks. Or scamper under bridge.”

“Is he family?” Newt asked. Using his wand, he fixed his pants. He noticed that neither Moira nor Declan flinched.

“No, he isn’t.” Moira snapped her journal closed. “But if you have what you need, you should probably go back to Miss Goldstein’s place, right?”

Newt was surprised by her abruptness. Till she pointed out the skylight.

“See? Darkness. It won’t be safe for you to move.” Moira gestured. “Declan can walk you to Mr. James’ place.”

“Or,” Declan met Newt’s look. “As the Falcons are looking for Moira, I think it might be best if Newt wasn’t seen traveling with me?”

“I agree,” Newt said. Declan gave him a grateful nod as Moira snapped.

“Fine. But at the least, we can’t have you walking around looking like that.”

When Newt arrived at the Goldstein apartment, he knocked on the front door.

Tina opened it. “Newt, where the hell have you—what are you wearing?”

Newt’s grin was half-hearted. He was hunched over. His hair was tucked into a newsies cap. One leg tied with a stilt, and his blue jacket had been turned filthy brown. As soon as she waved him in Newt transformed his clothes back to normal and yanked off the stilt. He tossed the small sack of Kyran feed to the side as well.

Then he faced Tina, who was looking at him with confusion, and said, “Is Queenie home?”
I WONDER WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN....MUHAHAHHAA
Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this chapter, it was a little (lottle) OC indulgent on my part
^-^ Have a lovely day!
~lize
Tina was staring at Newt like he'd sprouted horns. He was used to people looking at him like that, though, and didn't really mind. She was still wearing the blouse she'd gone to work in. The blouse she'd unbuttoned earlier. And any other thought in Newt's head went out the window.

"Newt!" Tina said, smiling. "Your limp is gone? How did you—"

“I went to see Moira,” he said, already striding towards her. His blood was rushing as he moved and the room never seemed so long. He would just hold her. For some reason, he felt the need to hold her.

“Is Queenie here?” he asked again.

“Listen, Newt,” Tina bit her lip. “About today, I just want you to know that—” But her eyes were widening when he stopped in front of her. “Hey, you look a little..."

Newt forced his thoughts away as he cupped her chin and kissed her. In his haste he moved a little too far to the left, capturing only half her mouth and some of her cheek, but she jerked straight as if he’d landed perfectly. He shifted fast and held her close. She was so soft and when he added even a little pressure to her back she bent right into him.

He felt delirious. He was about to take the kiss deeper when her hand pressed flat against his chest. He drew back.

Her face was flushed. “Newt.”

“Can I kiss you?” Newt said.

“No, that’s fine—“ But she strained back when he moved forward and this time he felt her restraint like a slap.

In a second he’d withdrawn his hands and sunk them in his pockets. He stepped back. He was blushing, dammit, and his heart that had been racing was now making him nauseas.

Her look turned horrified. “Oh, wait, that’s not what I—“

“It’s okay,” Newt said quickly. He wasn’t going to make her feel guilty. Of course, he’d just sprung on her. Hadn’t been thinking, really, and now that he was thinking he was astonished with himself. She’d just looked so beautiful standing there, and he...he just wanted.

But not right now. Obviously. He'd done something wrong. Newt swallowed hard and turned his face away. “It’s alright, Tina. I’m sorry that I was too...enthusiastic.”

“Newt, it’s not that, it’s just...”

Newt couldn’t bear hearing her voice. He took another step back. He felt like his lungs were drawing into themselves. It was scaring him. Why was he reacting this much? Was he really so...but he’d thought she wanted him, had seemed to, and he’d wanted to please her and somehow it had all gone so wrong—
“Newt!”

He felt warm, soft hands against his cheeks. It was a tether that he clung too, drawing him out of his thoughts.

When he could focus, Tina was there. She smiled a little and it eased the worry in her eyes. “There you are.”

“I’m sorry,” Newt looked down but she pulled his face up again, keeping her eyes on his.

“Newt,” Tina said. “You didn’t do anything wrong, okay?”

“Neither did you,” Newt said. “I’m sorry that I just sort of sprung on you. It was improper. I should have asked…”

“If that’s improper, then I really don’t mind,” Tina smiled. “But you need better timing.”

“Timing?” Newt repeated.

That’s when he heard the clatter from the kitchen. And if he’d been blushing before, now he was going to spontaneously combust.

“Queenie,” Newt stated.

Tina nodded. “Queenie. And…”

“And?”

Tina’s eyes darkened. She let go of his face and turned. For some reason, Newt was more worried seeing her back then when she’d pushed him away.

“I think you have some things to explain,” Tina threw back.

Newt followed her into the kitchen. Queenie was sitting at the table. She was scratching her hair and not looking at him. The table was completely set, thought it had four places...

That’s when Newt noticed the man pulling a roast out of the oven. He straightened and smiled, his round face tense with worry.

“Hey, Newt,” Jacob said.

“So,” Declan said. “Tell me why we are down in these creepy tunnels again?”

Moira glared over the handful of fire in her palm. “Well, I’m down here to clear my name and find a dragon. I don’t know why you’re down here.”

Their footsteps echoed around them. The walls appeared black but when the blue light of his magic or the warmer light of her’s flashed over, she could see the rotting white subway tiles. The tracks glittered under their feet. Some freak kind of moss was growing between the rotted wood.

“Well,” Declan rolled his shoulders. “Someone’s got to carry up your body if it gets burnt to a crisp.”
“I’d get turned to ash,” Moira said before she could help herself. “Not much to carry.”

“Good point.” Then he spasmed, swatting the air around his head and twisting his body. “Dammit, I hate spider webs! Hate hate hate.”

“I haven’t run into any.”

Declan grumbled and that had Moira smiling despite herself. She stepped around something mouldering on the tracks. It was a child’s shoe. She swallowed and tried not to think of how it got down here.

She held her magic fire a little closer to her chest. Despite its light, though, it gave off no warmth. The only warmth was Declan beside her. And though she’d never admit it, she was happy he was here. Having another capable magic user was probably a good idea. Because it was a dragon.

The full scale of what they were doing almost had Moira stopping right there.

“What kind of dragon are we looking for?” Declan asked casually.

“I’m pretty sure we’ll know it when we see it,” Moira said.

“I’ve never seen a dragon.”

“Mm. I’ve just seen them in Scamander’s book.”

“And what did it say about taking down the dragon?”

“We couldn’t take it down if we wanted to.”

Now Declan stopped. Moira went a few steps before turning. The light from his palms caught in his eyes as he lifted an eyebrow.

“So, just for clarification,” he said. “We have no way of fighting the dragon off? Which means if it decides to come after us—“

“We’re dead.”

Her words hovered in the air, more real suddenly then the rats she heard scampering in the shadows. He held her gaze. She pushed back her shoulders and said,

“This is to clear my name. I have to find where the dragons are before Markus let's them kill anyone else. But you don’t have to come—“ But please do, she begged internally. “And if it scares you, I won’t judge you for turning back.”

“You wouldn’t judge me,” Declan said. “for leaving you here?”

She shook her head, ignoring the cold in her chest. Declan closed his eyes then the fire in his palm flared nearly to the ceiling. Startled, Moira stepped back. The fire quieted but when Declan opened his eyes they blazed.

“That hurts me, Moira,” Declan said. “I didn’t know you held me in so low esteem.”

“It’s not—“

“Whatever.” Declan strode forward, past her, not looking at her. “Let’s find this bastard and get it
Moira trotted besides him. He still wasn’t looking at her. Thank God she could match his angry strides, or he’d have outstripped her.

“Hey,” Moira said. When he ignored her, she grabbed his arm. “Hey listen, you don’t get to just—“

But before she could get the word out, he’d grabbed her hand and yanked her back into the shadows. In a flash she found her back against the wall and his body against her’s.

She froze.

He’d spread his arms on either side, caging her in.

“Declan—“

“Keep still,” he whispered. He was staring to the side, his expression taunt, and she followed his gaze. Over the sound of her heart thundering, she heard voices.

She exhaled. Of course. Declan muttered under his breath and then the Trades on his skin pulsed a second before she felt the air around them shift and shiver.

“An invisibility shield?” she whispered. “I could’ve cast—“

“Shh!”

She kept quiet. Every time she breathed, she brushed against him. If he moved forward even an inch, he’d be cheek to cheek with her.

The voices drew closer. Moira discerned two different male voices.

“...can’t believe the bastards are stayin’ down ‘ere,” one man was saying.

“Dragons are chained to a food source,” the second man's voice was harsh and smoky. “We bring the food, they stay in place. But the poison I slipped them probably helps.”

Moira caught Declan's look, trying to communicate if he recognized the voices, but Declan just shook his head.

“The Falcons are idiots,” the first man’s voice rose. “They think they can keep a dragon contained? That’s bull.”

“Not just one, but two,” the rough voice laughed. “But when the dragons finally kill all their asses, I'll be there to pick up the business.”

Moira watched as the yellow light grew around the corner and the footsteps grew louder. The light spread across the wall until the people turned the corner. She was surprised to see three figures. In front were two men. Males, she corrected internally, because the second one was definitely a goblin. His beady eyes slid over the walls as he smoked a cigar.

Declan's eyes flickered with recognition. But Moira was distracted by the third person in the approaching group. He set her teeth on edge. He wore a black hood over dark pants and, as he approached, she saw his feet were bare, pale and bleeding. And suddenly Moira felt cold, like an icy wind had pierced her chest.

They were coming right past them. Moira held her breath. Declan pressed closer to her. Instinct
trumped the knowledge that they wouldn’t be seen.

“Well, how long do you give the Falcons, boss?” the man said. “Before the dragons bite them in the ass.”

“At this rate?” The goblin grinned. “I’d give ’em a week.”

Moira waited for one of them to look over but the two were too busy cackling to even bat an eye. The man in the hood didn’t even hesitate, either, but as he passed Moira smelled something like rotten meat that almost had her gagging.

Once they rounded the corner, both Moira and Declan exhaled.

“Are you okay?” Declan asked.

Moira nodded. Her thoughts raced. “Declan, did you know who that was?”

"Yeah. The Goblin's Gnarlack."

"What?" Moira barely kept her voice down. "He's the leader of your competitors, right?"

"Yeah." Declan lowered his head, his fingers tapping the wall on either side of her.

"He's got a lot to gain from Markus losing," Moira said. Declan almost laughed.

"That's putting it lightly, yeah." Moira softened her voice. “So why would Markus trust him?”

"Dunno. Markus is telling me less and less.” Declan shook his head. Moira could see his shoulders weighed down with his thoughts. “It’s like he doesn’t care if it all blows up. If a ton of people die. And he wasn’t like that before.”

Moira was going to ask, *before what?* But she had a sense of when that was.

“You need to get out of it, Declan.” Moira murmured. “Before he goes completely insane.”

“I know.” But he didn’t sound convinced. Moira sighed. The movement brushed some of the curls in his hair.

His body suddenly went rigid. It made her aware of his arms still around her, his chest like a sheild in front of her. And when he drew back to look at her, she could see the ring of gold around his irises. The pulse in his neck. The scars around his mouth.

His eyes glowed. “Moira?”

“Yeah?” Moira could barely breathe.

Then Declan pushed off the wall, away from her.

"Nothing," he said. "Never mind."

Blushing, Moira crossed her arms and they continued on, the air thick between them.
“Jacob?” Newt blinked. “What are you...”

“I brought him,” Queenie rose from her chair, smiling. “I thought he might be able to help.”

Newt’s mouth opened, shut, and he looked to Tina. But Tina just leaned against the counter. Her eyes were more watchful then condemning.

“Help with what?” Newt said, at a loss for anything else.

“With the girl blowing stuff up,” Queenie said. Her eyes flickered. “Wait, she’s not blowing things up?”

“Ah,” Newt glanced at Tina, then back to Queenie. “No, she’s not.”

Silence stretched between them all. Finally, Jacob exhaled and pressed a smile across his face.

“Well hey,” he said. “Let’s all sit, huh? Before the food gets cold.”

Tina sank into her chair. Newt felt odd, like his body was full of helium, about to explode, as he waited for Tina to snap further. But she kept quiet.

Newt looked at Queenie. Queenie was narrowing her eyes on Tina, obviously reading her sister’s thoughts. Not finding anything there Newt grasped at Jacob. Jacob gave him a wry look as if to say, well, let’s just brazen this out.

So Newt sank into his chair and picked up his knife.

Jacob cut the meat. They passed the potatoes. Queenie had lit candles. Newt wished he could taste the meat but it could have been rubber as much as he tasted it. The silence stretched and stretched. Newt counted the violets on the china. Re-counted. He imagined what each of his creatures could be doing. Even after all that, no one spoke, and Newt was ready to bolt from the table for his case when Queenie said “Well Teen, if that’s how you feel, you should really tell your boyfriend before he spontaneously combusts.”

Newt started. His neck almost snapped as he gazed at Tina. Tina’s fingers were gripping the wood of the table. Her dark eyes sparked in the candlelight.

She’s beautiful still, Newt thought, then shook his head as Queenie almost smiled next to him.

“I’d like to understand,” Tina ground out. “Why you didn’t tell me about Jacob.”

“We knew how you would react, and that it would cause problems for you,” Queenie said. “And Jacob, well—“

“Didn’t want to be Obliviated,” Jacob’s smile was watery. “Not after I found Queenie again.”

“After we found each other,” Queenie’s voice softened as she looked at Jacob and Jacob held her look with equal joy.

Newt looked from the warm couple to Tina, who in comparison resembled a thundercloud. But still Tina only said, “How long have you known?”

“Well, for the past year really—“

“A year?” Tina interrupted Queenie. “Are you serious? Are you insane?”
“But he didn't remember everything till after Newt got here!” Queenie said. “And I mean, Jacob kind of knew before then...”

“I did,” Jacob nodded, grinning. “I knew the second I saw her in my shop that—well, I knew she was something special, even though I didn’t quite remember why. I can’t explain it. And I thought, Newt said anyway, that since my memories of her were good then maybe the potion didn’t work the same?”

Now everyone was looking at Newt.

“It’s possible,” Newt whispered. He nodded and felt their looks leave him in obvious relief.

“Right. But then there was this guy, a Falcon...” and Jacob filled Tina in on the rest of the situation, Queenie chiming in occasionally. At some point Queenie and Jacob had joined hands.

Newt’s hands sweat. He had angled his body away from the table without realizing it. Tina nodded sometimes. Said very little. And when it was evident the two were done, Tina turned to Newt.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” she asked him.

Newt’s skin felt on fire. His voice was weak at first and he had to stop, start again. “It wouldn’t have been fair to make you choose between your job and hurting the people you care about. And I wanted Jacob back.” He watched her eyes darken, sharpen, and felt the change like a strike to his chest. “I’m sorry, Tina. I didn’t want to hurt you. And I thought it was—“

“Harmless.” Tina finished.

"No," Newt said. "Just not as important as everything else."

"This could cost me my job, Newt!" Tina burst out of her chair. "Any of this could make me lose my job! Did that ever occur to you?"

"Of course it did, but I thought--"

Tina spun away from him. Newt kept still. He had the fierce desire to flee from the table, the room even, but he stayed put. Tina’s rage deserved. After all Newt knew this moment would come to light. He just wished he’d been more prepared.

But now the moment was done. And now he just had to wait for Tina to turn back around.

Working with Ukranian Ironbellies was less terrifying.

Moira grabbed Declan’s sleeve. He tensed.

“Here?” he said.

She could only nod. Her body was shaking and instinctively she cast a shield around herself but it didn’t keep all of the cold out, all of the...the death she could taste on the air.

“A lot of people died here,” Moira whispered. “Or, their bodies came down here. I can’t tell.”

Declan just nodded. He grabbed her hand, and she felt the jolt of power flickering from him to her,
from her to him. They kept to the shadows as they continued forward.

She heard the breathing first. A huge rushing of air, sounding like waves crashing against the shore, that echoed across the walls. And the smell. Rotten flesh and the tang of smoke mixed together.

Declan’s skin shimmered as he cast a shield over himself. He still hadn’t let go of her hand.

It was around the next corner, she knew. So she stopped them and took a deep breath before peering around.

The tunnel opened wide to form a cavern. The walls were lit with torches. In the center were pieces of metal and track twisted up and around into a sort of nest. Sitting on top of it, curled around each other, were two dragons. She couldn’t help feeling a wave of disappointment. They weren’t as large as she thought they would be. Given, they were still the size of two cars put together, but she’d expected something grander. Their scales were a soft copper, their snouts wide and blunt. They breathed in synchronization. The air here was at least ten degrees hotter.

Declan had covered his mouth and nose. In shock or from the smell she didn’t know. His grip was a vise around her's.

Moira stared up. But it’s not like there was a sign that said, yes, here is where you are under New York. There were six metal grates in the ceiling. Air shafts, she assumed, though they were too far down for any light to come through. Still, if she could send up some sort of signal then someone above could tell her...but the person she’d trust for that was by her side.

“Declan,” she whispered. “Do you think you can Apparate out of here?”

“Why? They aren’t even awake.”

“I need you to go so I can send a signal—“

“I’m not leaving you!” His voice echoed across the walls and she yanked him back around the corner. He pulled free, glowering.

“Listen,” she said. “I’ll send up the signal, and then you can pin point where we are so the MACUSA can get down here later.”

His look cleared. "That's a good plan."

"Great. So just--"

"But I'm not doing it."

"Well that's-excuse me?"

“You heard me. What we’re going to do,” Declan peered back around the corner, “is climb out one of those grates.”

“WHAT?!"

Now he was the one shushing her. They both listened but the breathing continued, even and loud.

“Why would we do that?” Moira hissed. Declan was grinning.

“Because not only will we know where we are, we’ll also know a way for the goldbloods to get in without using the tunnels.”
“What’s wrong with the tunnels? It’s not like there’s guards or...” Moira’s brows drew together. That was suspicious. Even if the dragons were dangerous, why wasn’t there anyone guarding them?

“There aren’t any guards,” Declan said, mirroring her thoughts. Declan glanced back at her. “So, if it were me making this set up, I’d put some sort of binding spell on the ground to keep them in place. There’d be Trades at least.”

Moira scoured the floor with her gaze but saw nothing. So, thinking it was easy enough, she sent out a light pulse of magic. It scattered across the floor and then the markings glowed alive in reaction.

“What was that?” Declan said.

“That was me,” Moira shook her head. “The Trades aren’t nearly strong enough to keep them in. So why—“

The markings pulsed red and a sound like a siren going off split the air. Moira screamed and stumbled back and Declan shouted, grabbing her. She felt her feet leave the ground as they flew at one of the grates. Declan’s magic tore the grate cover to shreds. They barely fit into the tunnel of concrete.

Moira glanced down. A single golden eye peered up at her.

Right before the fire came.

Newt looked at Queenie. Queenie was looking at Tina. Jacob’s eyes darted from the two of them to Tina.

Tina exhaled and turned. Her face was drawn. “There’s not much I can say, is there? You all knew about this and kept it from me.”

“But you had so much going on...” Queenie silenced when Tina just left the room. Newt rose on instinct. But Queenie grabbed his arm, keeping him in place, and Queenie ended up rushing after her.

Left behind, Jacob and Newt regarded each other.

“Well,” Jacob’s look was half smile, half wince. "We should clean up?“

“Sure.” Newt took out his wand and sent the dishes off to the sink. Jacob blinked, already half out of his chair as the plate floated out of his hand. Jacob sat back down. After an awkward pause, Jacob smiled.

“So, Newt, you gotta catch me up.” Jacob leaned on the table. "How's everything been?"

Happy for the distraction that’s what Newt did. He finished with telling him about going to Moira’s apartment, something he hadn’t even told the girls about. As he spoke, Newt had one ear towards the other room. He took it as a good sign that he didn’t hear any raised voices.

“So,” Jacob said. "When are you guys gonna go looking for the dragons?"

“Well, I was thinking of doing it tonight, but..."
Jacob’s smile was understanding and he didn't press. Again, Newt focused on the back room. The voices had gone nearly silent.

"Hey Newt," Jacob said and Newt returned his attention. Jacob was looking at his hands. “You said, where these people live, No Maj’s and wizards live together?”

“Yes. I’ve never seen any place like it. Even in England, where relations with non magic people is more relaxed, it’s not like that.”

“You think it’s dangerous?”

“I think MACUSA will do something about it.”

Jacob sat back in his chair. Newt was happy that he didn’t look hurt by Newt's caution.

“So, you and Queenie?” Newt said.

“Yeah,” Jacob smiled to himself. Newt waited for him to continue but Jacob didn’t and Newt didn’t know how to expand. Still he couldn’t help being happy for Jacob. He wished the two had found each other in a different place. It frustrated him that there wouldn’t be any of this tension if this happened in England. Hell, they should just all move there after he and Tina—

Newt’s thoughts slammed to a halt.

Footsteps approached from behind him and he turned. Queenie had her arm around Tina, who’s eyes were red. Newt jumped out of his chair and came over but Tina leaned back from him. Newt stopped with his hands still outstretched.

“It’s okay,” Queenie said, her voice soft, like Tina might be spooked at any moment. “We talked about it and we’re okay. We just need to—“

Someone pounded on the door. They all froze. Jacob said, “Do I need to hide or—“

Newt stated.

Moira looked up. Her face was covered in soot and her hair stood on end like a demented chimney sweep. Declan wasn’t in better shape, coughing and sputtering on the ground.

“You found the dragons?” Newt stated.

Moira opened the door and Moira and Declan tumbled in. As they hit the ground a cloud of dust rose from them. Newt could smell what the problem was before they said anything.

“You found the dragons?” Newt stated.

And now they’re rampaging through the burrow?” Tina almost screamed. When Moira didn't reply, Tina grabbed her wand. "That's it, I'm calling this in. We can't go behind MACUSA—"

“NO!” Moira and Declan said at the same time. When Tina stared, Declan said, “If you call the Snatchers in now, it’ll be madness. That’s what Markus wants, see?”

“The Snatchers?” Newt said.

“The MACUSA raiders,” Moira said. “The ones that snatch people away.”
“They don’t snatch people,” Tina scoffed.

Moira’s eyes were cold. “What do you call removing people from their homes, cutting them off from their families, and then never letting anyone see that person again?”

There was an awkward pause.

“It doesn’t matter though because we need him,” Moira pointed at Newt. “To do his animal magic thing.”

“I don’t have an animal magic thing!” Newt sputtered. “They’re Vipertooths! We’ll need at least thirty other wizards to incapacitate just one of them.”

“Hence,” Tina said. “MACUSA.”

“If I can get you thirty wizards worth of magic,” Moira said. “Can you tell me how to control a Vipertooth?”

The only one who didn’t burst into questions was Declan. Declan watched Moira with the most intensity Newt had ever seen. Finally Moira lifted her hands and shouted for all of them to shut up. Her flat eyes met Newt’s. “Well? Can you?”

“I can tell you some things, yes,” Newt said. “But I don’t want you endangering yourself.”

Moira didn’t smile. “I forfeited my protection that when I woke up a pair of dragons. So let’s go.”

But before anyone could move, Tina stepped in front of the door. She lifted her wand. Newt had never seen such rage in her eyes before. Everyone stopped.

"Miss Goldstein?" Moira said.

"We need to follow the rules on this one," Tina’s voice was almost hollow. "We need to bring in MACUSA. The situation has changed."

"Tina?" Newt said but Tina only shook her head, her face set in a flat mask.

"Didn't you hear what she said?" Declan snapped. "Bringing in a host of Snatchers is only going to make things worse! I can get the Falcons to-"

Moira grabbed Declan's arm and Declan quieted.

"Miss Goldstein, please," Moira's eyes shone. "You told me to trust you. Right? So can't you just-"

But Moira didn't finish because Tina lifted her wand to cast and Declan grabbed Moira and Apparated before Tina could finish the spell.

There was a tense pause. No one breathed.

"Tina?" Queenie said.

"Keep Jacob in the apartment," Tina said. Then she grabbed Newt and Apparated.

Chapter End Notes
...oh my, that might have been some angst. Got to go adjust the tags again...
Anyway, prepare for some fire breathing and magical battling. Thanks for the reads :D
~lize
“Tina, just think this through,” Newt said. "If you were thinking clearly you would see that this is entirely irrational!"

Tina had taken him one block away from MACUSA. It was dark and cold outside as she dragged him down the sidewalk. Still in half shock Newt let himself be dragged. Facing ahead Tina’s face was like stone.

“I am thinking, Newt. I’m thinking more clearly then I have for days. This is my job, you know? Catching bad wizards.”

“But Moira needs—“

“You’re making it too personal!” Tina spun. Newt almost crashed into her. Tina waved her hands. “Just step back a second. What we have is a bad wizard doing bad things to hurt people. That’s something the Aurors should help with!”

Newt still did not look convinced but he kept his quiet. Tina sighed.

“Look. The president is an intelligent, reasonable woman. She’ll listen to reason.”

“That hasn’t always been my experience,” Newt said.

“Well, this time there’s no Grindelwald to get between us and the President.” Tina grabbed his arm and hauled him forward. “We need to convince them to help us. And we’re here to help Moira. If they don’t know they aren’t helping Moira then...then...so be it.”

Tina knew she was walking a fine line here. But she also knew that her instincts told her that the plan was right. That Moira could be helped and she could do her job at the same time.

When Newt shifted his grip in her hand, she expected him to pull away. Instead he rotated his hold so his hand was clasped in her’s by choice rather than by force. Tina couldn’t believe the wave of relief such a simple motion caused.

When they entered the MACUSA building the danger clock above was practically shrieking from the chaos. Wizards bustled across the lobby, shouting or pointing, and he noted Aurors crowding towards the elevator, ordering people out of their way.

Tina recognized Robert as he bolted out of the crowd.

“Goldstein!” he said. “Hey, I got some new thing for you to—”
“Later, Haywood!” Tina snapped back at Robert. “I need to see the president.”

“But it’s about that case you was lookin’ into!” Robert said. “It’s about that snitch’s sister!”

Tina stopped and Newt finally caught his breath. It took that pause for Robert to notice him. Robert's eyes hardened.

“And who’s this guy?”

“An expert on the problem that I need to see the president about,” Tina said. She snatched the file from Robert’s hands, grabbed Newt’s hand with the other, then plowed on through the lobby. She heard Robert shouting after her and ignored it.

“There’s a back elevator,” Tina whispered. “Only for Auror’s. Goes right to Picquery.”

Newt just nodded. He could barely hear over the tolling warning clock. The elevator ride was too short and tense. Just before the doors opened, Tina deliberately freed her hand from his. She glanced at Newt to check his reaction. He was pale and sweating a little. He kept clasping his hands in front of him as if to hold an imaginary suitcase.

His gaze met her’s. She tried to communicate reassurance, didn’t know if she succeeded before the doors opened and she was forced to step out.

They both walked into the open, airy main conference room used for large case meetings. Most of the Aurors were already collected, along with a few people in suits that Tina vaguely recognized from social relations department. The suit people looked at her a second before seizing on Newt.

The president herself spoke first. She wore her official black robe, her hair wrapped into a brilliant golden turban. “Miss Goldstein. I wondered when you would show.”

“Madame president,” Tina stopped and Newt halted behind her. Picquery’s eyes flashed.

“And Mr. Scamander is with you.”

“Yes,” Tina took another step forward. “Madame president, I understand that the chaos clock is picking up on the situation in the fourth. I brought Mr. Scamander to—“

“A situation in the fourth?” Picquery straightened. “Is that what is setting off the alarms?”

Tina froze. The other Aurors had gone silent, their gazes piercing and alert as wolves. Tina glanced at Newt but Newt shrugged helplessly. Tina faced ahead again.

“Yes, mam. Of course. I mean, didn’t you—“

“Our sensors have been goin’ crazy for an hour,” one of the Aurors said. “But we weren’t able to trace it.”

“Fourth makes sense,” an Auror named Lillian said. “It’s so warded.”

“Must be the Falcons,” still another said. “Getting in another fight or that arsonist blowing stuff up —“

The president lifted a hand and the chatter stopped.

“So the question is, if our sensors didn’t pinpoint the location,” the president’s eyes darted from Newt to Tina. “How exactly did you two know about it?”
Tina scrambled, reordering her plans, her words. How could they not have known about the explosions? Had Moira and Declan not set the dragons free? Dammit, she should have listened to them. She should have...

“Miss Goldstein,” The president prompted.

“Yes,” Tina lifted her head. No matter. She just had to brazen this out. “Madame president, I received a tip from the local girl in my report about the situation.”

“The girl with the Seals,” the president said. At the word Seals murmurs rose among the Aurors. Tina felt as if she was outside it somehow. It was unsettling but she continued on regardless.

“Yes, ‘mam. That girl. She informed me that two dragons have been set loose in the fourth district and—”

“Dragons? Are you serious?” Robert bolted forward. “They could kill hundreds of people! And the exposure will be terrible. My God, there’s be hundreds to Obliviate—“

“No need to state the obvious, Mr. Haywood,” the president snapped. Then she focused behind Tina. “Mr. Scamander here can help prevent extensive damage. He can also show us how to contain the dragons. Correct?”


“Well then,” the president gestured for Newt to step forward. “Explain away, Mr. Scamander. And know that hundreds of lives depend on us doing this right.”

Tina could practically hear the blood drain from Newt’s face. But his lips set and his shoulders moved back. She couldn’t help being proud as he said, “Of course, Madame president.”

When Moira Disapparated, she was blinded by smoke. Unprepared, she gasped in a lungful and it set her chest burning.

“We’re on the rooftop near your shop!” Declan cried. “But I can’t see a bloody thing...”

They could hear just fine. Screams filled the burning air. She heard the crash and splinter of wood and brick, felt the building tremble under her feet even as the smoke burned in her eyes.

The fear of everyone was barreling at her senses and Moira shielded herself as best she could. She felt her magic coiling deep inside her, stronger and stronger by the second as the panic rose in the air.

Still holding Declan, Moira sent a beam of magic slicing through the air to clear it. The smoke flew back.

And hell waned before them.

She counted three blocks completely aflame. People below, far away, darted and fled through the streets, hounded by the flames and smoke. Another explosion racked only a few blocks away. The sound blew back across to them and the heat hit right after. Moira saw buildings collapse in heaps of flaring red and orange.

And then, over all the din and heat and flame, she heard a huge roar. It made her heart quake, her human instincts on edge. A column of blue flame shot straight into the sky.
On the other side of the burrow another column of flame rose. And there were more screams. Moira’s knees wanted to give out. Her whole body wanted to run the other way. To go to her rooftop and hunker down among her plants and Kai—God, where was Kai? And Peter? And Mr. O’Connor, and little Cassie, and—

“The trenches,” Declan said.

Moira jumped. “What?”

“During the war there was this trench, somewhere on the front. My buddy Frank told me about it in a letter. Men’s feet came off in the mud. Lots of dead bodies. No food or water. Gun shells everywhere.”

She realized what he was doing. It was a sort of game they had. They had to think of a worse moment then the one they were in.

It wasn’t easy at first.

“The day my father died,” Moira said, “was worse than this.”

Declan took a sharp breath through his teeth. “The day mum got the letter saying Joe had died.”

“I remember Joe. He had a good laugh, too.” Moira could feel her chest loosening. The air she breathed tasted like cinders. “Armistice day.”

“Seriously?” Declan turned his head. “How was that a bad day?”

“It was the day the dead soldiers’ spirits started washing up on the beaches,” Moira took another deep breath. “I could hear them scrammin’ at night, tryin’ to find their way home.”

“Huh,” Declan nodded. “Yeah, compared to that...this ain’t bad.”

“It’s still pretty bad,” Moira said.

“Yeah.”

The two stared over the city. Watched smoke billow and choke the sky.

Then, Moira noticed the rooftops. The ones that weren’t burning, anyway. On them she saw small figures darting in and out of the smoke.

The tallest building in the burrow was a church.

“Declan,” Moira pointed. “Look, on the steeple!”

Declan narrowed his eyes just as a beam of white magic shot straight from the steeple top. Moira could barely make out the figure putting up the signal. As it reached the sky, the white magic twirled and expanded like a cloud, then shaped itself into a soaring falcon.

Then, from the other rooftops rose the same white light, the same white falcons bursting across the smoke-dark sky.

“A White Falcon,” Moira spun on Declan. “That means a truce, right?”

“Ceasefire. Anyone help if they can,” Declan nodded. He drew his hand from Moira and stepped a few feet away. He drew up the sleeve on his right arm and exposed one of the trades etched there.
He tapped it with his finger and then threw his right hand up into the air as white magic burst from his skin. Moira felt his power like another blast of heat.

No. Not as a blast of heat.

Moira spun in time to hear the screams suddenly burst closer. The building across from her was full of small windows. She saw smoke collecting within the glass, then from the bottom up she saw flames burst within until all the windows exploded. Moira felt the heat blare into her back and the force threw her further than possible, crashing into Declan and sending them both skidding across the rooftop. Declan hit the roof first and Moira landed on him.

“Are you okay?!” Moira screamed but Declan had his eyes closed and his head turned away. A cut bled on his head and he groaned. Smoke surrounded them. Moira could barely make out the glows of the fires around the building.

But she heard the crashing booms. Like massive footsteps. At each sound the building beneath them shook.

Something was climbing.

Moira looped her arm under Declan and heaved. Between her magic and adrenaline, her friend rose easily in her hold.

Dragging Declan, sending smoke flying away so she could see ahead of her, Moira strode to what she hoped was the fire escape. She saw the roof end. Saw the next roof before her. Sending a silent prayer she threw herself and Declan across the two buildings.

If she had looked down, she would have seen the pair of golden eyes staring up at her. But Moira didn’t look down or back. Not as they crashed onto the roof. Not as she leapt over the next. Not until she was back at her rooftop.

She set Declan down against the raised roof ledge. His head lolled like an infant’s.

“Hey,” Moira said to his face. “Hey, Declan. Wake up.”

He moaned. Moira checked his forehead but felt no fever. She glanced behind her. Sirens rang through the neighborhood. Across the rooftops, beams of magic were shooting out and meeting and intertwining until a net of power spread over the entire burrow. The flames that burst up to collide with it instantly vanished.

The hair rose on her arms. When had the Falcons packed in that kind of power?

Then she turned back to Declan. “Hey, useless! Get up! We have to fight. We have to help people, c’mon!” She shook him, heedless when he hissed in pain. Something like fire was burning in her veins, making her see dark spots. “Declan, wake up! You weren’t even thrown that hard!”

“No, he wasn’t.”

Moira went still. She couldn’t turn. Her hands were like vises on Declan now. Her spine prickled. She tasted rotten earth, like she had in the tunnels.

“You can tell they aren’t human,” that same cold, soft voice said. “How excellent.”

Declan made another small sound, almost a whimper. A cold sweat had broken across his skin. His breathing was erratic.
Moira’s heart stuttered. Poison. Had he been...

She rose and spun.

There were eight men behind her. The four in the back wore solid black and had bleeding bare feet. She felt cold looking at them. The other three were human and Falcon’s judging by their caps and sneers. She recognized one of the brunette Falcon's...Lucas, that was his name.

And the man in front was one she didn’t recognize. He had a mane of blonde hair and a narrow build. One of his eyes was almost white blue and the other was brown. The edges of his body rippled. Was he wearing a disguise?

“Care to ask,” the blonde said, “how exactly I am killing your friend?”

“Dragons are difficult to incapacitate,” Newt said. “Mostly because their scales are almost entirely magic resistant. Our best hope is an abundance of firepower and knowing their weak spots. For the Vipertooth, it is the mouth, eyes, and the base of their wings.”

“That will kill it?” Auror Lillian asked.

Newt shook his head emphatically. “The Vipertooth is not native to this area. Killing it would be a violation of your treaty with the Southern Americas.”

“Seriously?” Lillian said. “It’s just a beast, why can’t we—“

“Continue, Mr. Scamander,” the president ordered.

Newt swallowed. He was standing in front of fifty Aurors in the rounded conference room. Tina was in the mid-back, and he tried to focus on her face without obviously focusing on her. She kept giving him small nods. It was a great comfort.

Between him and the Aurors was a glowing golden map. A track of light was expanding, stretching over the glassy streets of the city. Tina had explained to him that it tracked magic usage in an area, revealing exposure levels.

The golden tracks almost overwhelmed the entire map.

“I suggest that we drive the two creatures,” Newt stepped forward, gesturing at the map. He explained how he pinpointed the creatures’ most probable location from the concentrations of magic in the area. It would be best, he reasoned, for them to split into two groups that would circle and eventually attack the beasts from all sides. Once the creatures were unconscious, then it would be a matter of...and Newt knew this might be a hard sell, but it was the only compromise he could think of.

“Shrinking the dragons?” Tina gaped. “Are you mad?”

“No,” Newt said. “If we use diminuendo spell all at once, the dragons should become the size of my palm. It wouldn’t cause any physical harm to the dragon per-sey, and it would limit the damage it could cause until I return it to its native lands.“

The Aurors looked like he’d suggested they do a hula dance. Even Tina didn’t look much more supportive.
“Shrinking dragons is unprecedented,” The president spun one of her rings. “Are you certain it will work?”

“I’m not,” Newt said. He noted Tina grimacing and added, “But if we can get the dragons unconscious, then we can restrain them as well. The shrinking would be a, ah, pleasant bonus.”

“A pleasant bonus indeed,” President Picquery almost smiled. She rose from her chair. The other Aurors did as well. Newt felt the air change, filled with a hum.

“Aurors, split into two groups. Miss Goldstein and Mr. Scamander will lead group A. Group B will be led by Miss Leeds and myself.”

“President!” a blonde Auror interrupted, her eyes flaring. “It’s rather dangerous this time, and you might be—“

“All the more reason to fight alongside my colleagues,” the president said. It was the end of the discussion. The Auror nodded and stepped back.

The president set back her shoulders. “If there are any other objections, speak now.” When silence roared, the president smiled. “Good then. Let’s move out.”

As the Aurors split into two groups Newt drew over to Tina’s side. Other Aurors surrounded her, though. Newt felt out of place in the sea of smart hats and leather jackets. But then Tina pulled him to her side. The Aurors' eyes darted between the two. Assessing, calculating. Newt was very glad that he wasn’t a dark wizard.

“Mr. Scamander is the expert,” Tina said. “If you have questions, contact me using this.” She held up some sort of box. Newt had seen some during the war. Something like a radio. Tina continued. “Remember when we get there it’ll be a fire storm. Prepare yourselves for the panic too.” Tina continued talking as they made their way to a large room for Apparating. “Each team of four should try to minimize damage as they can, but our objective is the dragon’s containment. After that we worry about the injured.”

They reached a wide room where wizards were Apparating and Disapparating rapidly from. Tina spun to address the thirty or so wizards behind her. Newt noticed the tremor in her shoulders and the slight waver in her eyes. Yet the Aurors looked up to her without question in her eyes. Newt couldn’t help but be awestruck.

“Remember,” Tina said. “If we fail at this, we’ll be exposed and lots of people will get hurt.”

Newt wondered if that was supposed to be a pep talk. The other Aurors just nodded with their deep, serious expressions. Newt decided that laughing with panic was a bad idea so he stifled it.

Tina grabbed his hand.

“You know your Apparation points,” Tina said. “See you there.”

In a rush of magic, the Aurors Apparated.

Newt and Tina arrived just outside the burrow. Screams and smoke bombarded them. Newt drew his wand. Tina already had hers extended, her other hand holding a handkerchief to her nose as they moved forward. People darted in and out of the houses, crying, hauling boxes or children as they fled. Seeing their wands most did not stop, but one woman grabbed Tina’s arm.

“Are the MACUSA’s comin?’” the woman screamed. “Are they comin’?”
“They’re here,” Tina said.

The woman’s eyes rounded. She stumbled back, turned to scream at the building. “Frank, get the kids! We’re leavin’!”

And she ran back into her house. Tina exchanged a look with Newt. They continued forward. Their plan was to reach one of the tallest buildings in the burrow and survey from above, checking in on the other Aurors, to make sure the dragons were where they were supposed to be. Then they’d coordinate using that talking box.

In a great flash, light poured from above them. Newt ducked, as did Tina, but all he saw were great beams of light pouring over the sky. They linked together, weaving into one massive dome.

“The Falcon shield!” a local man said. His eyes glowed and he smiled. “We’re saved!”

“Except the dragon is under the dome with us,” Tina muttered, but she grabbed Newt’s hand and propelled him towards the next street. Here the shops were dark and silent. Smoke drifted through the narrow street, eerie and stifling.

They were climbing a fire escape when Tina said, “How are you doing, Newt?”

“What?” Newt called up. Tina glanced down at him.

“You’re quiet. You scared?”

“Not really,” Newt said honestly. He surveyed the surroundings. Flame, cinder, and screaming. “Though, this is probably the worst case scenario.”

Tina scowled. “Tell me about it.”

When they reached the rooftop, Newt already had his long distance scope glass out. Not that he really needed it. The two largest plumes of smoke rose only a few blocks away. His scope was able to see through the smoke, though, to the source.

“I see him,” Newt said.

“The dragon?” Tina came close, peering over his shoulder.

“He’s an adolescent,” Newt spun, pointed his scope to the other plume, and nodded. “So is she. Siblings, most likely. Working together.”

“Good or bad?”

“Adolescent dragon scales aren’t as impervious. However, they are a bit testy compared to their elder counterparts.”

“Testy?” Tina had to stifle her smile.

“Yes. So you should call in your colleagues now, and—“

But then Tina’s talking box vibrated. Tina jumped, glanced at Newt, who was lowering his scope in confusion as she answered.

“This is Goldstein,” Tina said. “What are you—“

“We’re under attack!” the person cried. Tina jerked back.
“Well, it’s a dragon—“

“Not a dragon!” the voice rippled with static. Newt heard another explosion. “Other wizards, on the rooftops! They’re sending down curses on us.”

“Falcons,” Newt breathed.

Tina nodded. To the radio she said, “Listen, they’re gang members and highly dangerous. Try to move indoors if you can. Do what you have to do, but reach those meeting points. Not retreats. We need to contain this.”

“Roger that. Over and out.”

The line went dead. Tina shook her head and her curls came out of her pins, scattering around her face. “Damn kids. What are they thinking, attacking Aurors?”

“Chaos,” Newt gazed over the burning city. “Absolute chaos.”

“Who are you?” Moira demanded. She reached into her coat for her knives.

“You don’t remember me?” The young man smiled. “I remember you.”

The men behind him fanned out, seeking to circle her. With a shock, Moira realized they were avoiding the shield around her shop. So they didn't know it was there. That was good at least. Declan was first priority.

She placed herself in front of her friend.

“Not sure if you’ve noticed, but there’s a bit of a situation going on,” Moira gestured around. “Wouldn’t it be better to do this later?”

“I’m not here for you,” the young man said. “I’m here for him.”

Moira bared her teeth and spread her arms, blocking Declan with her body. “Why?”

“Markus wants his right hand by his side during his glorious conquering of the burrow, and the defeat of MACUSA,” the blonde waved his hand. “Or something like that.”

“Conquering MACUSA?” Moira gaped. “Is that what he calls this?”

Another building exploded, sending ash flying across the roof. Since Moira was shielded it didn’t hurt her but Declan sputtered behind her. She extended her shield without thinking. She felt his heart beat as her magic poured over him. The beat was too fast. Erratic. Moira began to pour her magic into him. Purging. Seeking the source of the poison.

Till then, she had to keep the scary men distracted. Moira said,

“Why did you hurt him if you wanted to bring him in?”

The blonde man simply wagged his fingers, and one of the Falcons lunged forward. Moira had time to see the kid’s grinning face before she switched her stance and flung her knife hand forward. She sliced a quick x across the man’s chest. He flew back like he’d been hit by a racecar. But then he rolled, catching his weight in a crouch and lunging forward again. So Moira just hexed him. It hit the young man in the face. He screamed till he lost his balance and went unconscious.
“Impressive,” the blonde young guy said. “But amateur.”

Another Falcon stepped forward. Trades glowed from his skin as he took up a fighting stance.

Moira grimaced. Her footwork was limited since she had to protect Declan. But she could still manage a few things. She rolled out her wrists and focused her magic to move through her blood, through her limbs. She imagined Liam’s voice in her head, guiding her through the motions.

*Think of a snake striking, Mo, quick and decisive...think of water, how it flows from one end and forward, that is how magic moves in a fight...*

The other Falcon was good. But Moira was better. Not to mention, judging by the Falcon’s arm movements and footwork, Declan most likely trained him. So it only took a few fighting strikes before that Falcon also fell. This time, though, Moira hauled her attacker up and laid a knife against his neck.

The Falcon went still against her. He smelled like sweat and smoke. Plus he was young. Maybe younger than Moira. Moira didn’t want to kill him, but if it was between a stranger and Declan...

“Cure Declan,” Moira said. “Or I kill this kid.”

“No you won’t,” the blonde said. “But I appreciate the sentiment.”

Moira dug her knife into the kid’s throat till he bled. She could feel his fear in waves over her. The kid began to cry. The last Falcon standing, Lucas was braced to leap forward. And some part of Moira reveled in that fear, the power of it all. She gritted her teeth.

“Seriously, kill him,” the blonde said. “I could care less.”

Moira believed him. Lucas flinched. The other guys, the ones in black, could have been statues.

Behind her, Declan stirred. Groaned loudly. But now she could sense that the poison was almost all purged. He was regaining his strength.

A few more minutes. That was what she needed. She shoved the guy out of her arms. Quick as a bullet Lucas ran forward and caught him, drawing his brother back as the injured one sobbed. In an odd flash, Moira wondered what the kid’s name was.

“And to answer your previous question,” the blonde said, “I didn’t poison Mr. Gerald. You did.”

“What?”

“I had to come up with some reason to kill you,” the blonde smiled. “Killing his second in command would make even Markus want you dead.”

“He already wants me dead!” Moira screamed.

Suddenly the blonde was right in front of her. Moira stumbled back. His strange eyes burned with calculation, something almost like greed.

“I don’t want you dead,” he said in his soft voice. “I want to free what is inside you, Moira. The magic that pulses to be released.”

Moira whipped her knife and slashed off his fingers.

With a roar the young man stumbled back, grabbing his hand close. The skin was already healing as
The men in black flew forward.

The first punch threw Moira back across the roof. She slammed into the chimney and fell to her knees. Her whole chest throbbed.

What the hell was that? She thought, but then the man was back in front of her. His pale hands closed on her collar and hoisted her up into the air—or would have, if the worn fabric didn't give way. Moira fell and rolled, trying to make it back to Declan. Instead another man in black intercepted. Moira lowered her weight, twirled and flung her arms out and around, then dove to the ground as her magic split the air just above her body. Rose-hued knives of power sliced and spun through the air, tearing into each man in black in turn.

But only one fell completely.

Moira stared. One man in black was missing an arm, and a hole had bored through his chest, but he still lurched forward. The other was crawling—she’d taken out his legs—back towards Declan. Moira threw her knife and it caught the crawler in the back of his head. The man went limp. The knife flew back into her grip. The blood one it was sticky and dark. Inhuman.

“What the hell?!” Moira murmured. She twirled the knife till all the blood vanished.

She sensed she was now alone. The blonde, the Falcons, and the men in black were gone. Even the dead bodies were gone. Moira spun. The wind ruffled across the rooftop. But it was just her and Declan.

Rushing to his side, Moira almost tripped. She crouched next to him.

“Hey,” she said, “Wake up. Open your eyes.”

“Mrphm,” Declan replied. She laid her hand against his neck. His skin was cooler and his heart quieting. Moira’s heart almost stopped from relief. She looped her arm under him. “You’re useless, you know that? All you do is scare me to death.” Moira hauled him up. Declan turned his head into her neck, murmuring something that sounded like a curse. Moira got them up and heading towards her shop.

The city still burned. Magic was shooting from the rooftops.

“We need to get help,” Moira said. “We'll get you fixed up, then we'll figure something out.”

Declan’s arm tightened around her. Moira smiled. "We'll make it, don't worry."

The air rushed around her as she passed through the shield. Declan’s arm was a vise. Moira waved her hand and the door cloth moved back. She almost cried seeing her familiar shop.

And Kai perched in the corner. Seeing her enter, Kai flew forward and crashed into her head. Moira laughed.

"Calm down, I have an injured," Moira said. She set Declan down on the floor and disentangled Kai from her. She had just set him down when Moira felt something yank her backwards. Too shocked to resist, Moira pitched out through the door.

"Moira?" she heard Declan say. "Hey, Mo-

Then her shop exploded.
The force was strong enough that Moira flew back and into the roof ledge. Her back connected painfully. A snapping sound somewhere in her body. Moira didn’t feel the pain of it. Felt nothing. Her brain wasn’t processing.

She could see her shop. It was on fire. Moira stared. Her little rooftop shop, the one her brother had warded and protected, was on fire. The little window glowed orange. An inhuman screech poured out. She saw a shadow amid the flames. Someone was beating against the window to escape. The door flap had turned into brick.

Kai, Moira thought, blank. Declan. Kai is trapped. Declan is burning.

Moira pushed herself up just as the smell of death pierced the air. It hit her like a wave of nausea. Instantly, the fire dissipated. At first all Moira saw was more smoke. She crawled forward.

"Declan?" she said. "Kai?"

The smoke lifted. But there was nothing but smoldering coals. She saw her half melted cauldron. Some flashes of glass. And death. She could taste death, fresh and strong.

Her chest splintered. Moira felt the magic inside her spring from its coil and rampage through her veins, her chest, till all she saw was red and all she felt was the ice cold nothing.

She heard footsteps. Turned her head to see the blonde dusting off his hands as he moved forward.

‘Well,” the psycho said. “They were going to die anyway.”

No, Moira thought. No more. Moira rose to a standing.

The blonde smiled. “Beautiful.”

The magic collided inside her body, seeking some form of release. And Moira saw not reason not to.

Let it rampage. Let it tear this man before her apart. Then let it end.

Moira lifted her arms over her head as she screamed and her magic roared into the sky in one massive bolt. It splintered the sky like lightning. She felt like her body turned into diamonds then melted into pure fire itself.

Then her magic fell to the ground.

All Newt saw was magic. Tina grabbed him and threw him to the rooftop. On his back, Newt stared at the magic that splintered like a lightning storm across the sky. It swirled against the Falcon’s dome before it simply absorbed the white energy. The dome turned pink, then smashed, and the magic snaked back to Earth.

Newt couldn’t stop watching. The magic hit the ground in explosions, like bombs, splitting street and building alike. Newt peered through his scope, but the glass was shaking so he barely saw the dragon—and then a bolt of magic hit it, and the dragon simply exploded.

The other dragon roared in pain, in fear, and took to the sky. But the lightning found the dragon as well and in another bright burst of magic the dragon exploded. Newt did duck now as he felt something like heat rumble across the rooftops.

Tina grabbed his hand. He grabbed her other hand, and they lay next to each other and waited.
Till silence came.

Newt lifted his head. Ash drifted down from above, quiet as snow. It was like no one in the burrow dared breathe.

Crawling to the side, Newt peered through the scopes. The dragons were gone. People hovered in the streets, looking up, looking at each other.

“Newt,” Tina said.

Newt turned. Tina was pushing herself from the ground and he went over to help her up. She leaned on him. Her face was pale. He was shaking along with her.

“That was Moira,” Tina said.

“How do you know?”

“I just do,” Tina’s hands lifted, pressed against her ears. “My ears are ringing. I’ve never seen magic like that. And my ears are ringing.”

Recognizing shock’s early stages, Newt wrapped his arms around Tina and held her close. She was growing colder against him and kept saying the same thing over and over.

Newt reached for her talking box, but it was blackened. They had to find another way to contact the Aurors, then. He wondered if the magic had killed them, or had Moira...if it had been Moira...

Something flew into Newt’s back. Tina screamed and Newt drew his wand.

But the creature stumbled back and hissed, its feather’s rising in outrage.

“Kai!” Newt said.

The Kyran hissed again, flapping its wings before rising into the air and diving down to snag Newt’s hair in his claw. The Kyran dragged him forward; strong enough that Newt moved a few paces.

Then Tina grabbed Newt and screamed, “Let him go!”

The Kyran did as she said. Kai circled overhead and screamed again. Newt thought he saw fear in its jade green eyes.

“Tina,” Newt said.

“No,” Tina was already shaking her head. “No way am I following that thing.”

“He’ll take us to Moira,” Newt was still looking up at Kai. “He always knows where she is.”

He could practically hear the deliberation in Tina’s head. He watched it play across her face. Tina sighed.

“Fine. We’ll follow the damn bird.”

So they did. Kai led them around back alleys and streets, as far from the people as he could, until they reached a building familiar to Newt. A familiar rooftop.

Kai soared straight up and away as Newt made it to the top.
The chimney that Moira’s shop had leaned against was blown apart. Massive scorch marks darkened the rooftop. There was a body lying to the side, so burned Newt couldn’t identify if it was a man or a woman.

Moira was on her knees. Her wild hair obscured her profile. She was probably looking ahead. Her mouth was half open, and her hands were palm up on her folded knees.

“Moira,” Newt said softly. “Can you hear me?”

Moira didn’t respond. Newt went to her side. “Moira, if you can hear me, I need you to...”

Newt didn’t finish. He could see what Moira could now. It was the remnants of her shop, he assumed. One wall still stood, but the rest was just a huge pile of smoking ash. Newt remembered Moira’s easy pride in her work, the homely world she’d created for herself, and Newt felt an overwhelming sadness for her.

Tina came over as well. Rage boiled in her eyes.

“He’s dead,” Moira said.

“A lot of people are dead, thanks to your fire storm!” Tina cried. “What were you thinking?”

“I didn’t kill anyone.” Moira didn’t even blink. “But he’s dead.”

Tina paused. Newt took that time to crouch beside Moira. He reached out to turn the girl’s shoulders towards him. Moira’s head dragged to turn, and when she finally did, her eyes were unfocused. Her pupils consumed her eyes.

“Moira listen to me,” Newt said. “Did you send up that magic that killed the dragons?”

“Yes,” Moira said. “Because he’s dead.”

“Who is dead?”

“Everyone,” Moira said. Tears slid from her eyes. “Everyone.”

Newt lifted his eyes to Tina. Tina shrugged helplessly. The rage had quieted a bit, replaced with something like pity.

“She’s in shock,” Newt said.

“Good.”

Tina and Newt spun to see the President standing at the edge of the roof. Behind her were five Aurors.

Only five.

The President strode forward as Tina moved towards her. Newt found himself shielding Moira on instinct.

“President,” Tina said. “Are the other Aurors—“

“Your team is alive,” Picquery said. “Thanks to your orders to keep indoors. But I lost ten of mine.”

“Ten?” Tina repeated. “Oh God...”
“I can explain later,” Picquery said. “But for now...”

Three Aurors waved their wands and Moira was thrown back from Newt. Her hands and ankles were bound and a cloth appeared over her mouth. Besides her eyes closing, Moira didn't react.

“Moira Byrne,” the president said. “You are under arrest.”

“Wait,” Newt said. “She isn’t well right now, she’s—“

“Not your concern, Mr. Scamander,” The President waved her hand. Moira lifted into the air. Moira’s head lolled to the side. She was shaking. Tears leaked from her eyes.

A screech came from above. There was a streak of azure right before Kai clawed at one of the Aurors restraining Moira. The Auror fell back, screaming. The other lifted his wand at Kai. Kai curled through the air and dove at the man with his claws extended, his beak screeching.

“No!” Newt screamed, and without a thought he stunned Kai.

Kai fell to the rooftop. Newt gathered the creature to his chest. Kai was twitching but alive.

Moira was floating next to the president now. The president’s eyes were cold, merciless as they settled on Newt and Tina.

“She’ll be questioned,” The president said. “Tomorrow. I expect you two at my office at eight o’clock. Until then, you can rest. Thank you,” the president gave them her back. “For your hard work this night.”

The president, with Moira, vanished. The other Aurors Apparated as well.

Left on the rooftop, Newt and Tina couldn’t move.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter was kind of exhausting...hope you all made it out unscathed :3 Thanks for the reads and see you next chapter where more crazy stuff will probably happen! ~lize
Chapter Summary

Tina and Newt resolve some tension and the President calls.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Smoke still floated in the air. Wind ruffled the ashes, exposing the orange coals beneath. The smell of burnt flesh invaded both Newt and Tina's noses.

“What the hell?” Tina burst out. “I mean...what the hell?!”

“I think I need to lay down,” Newt said. He sank onto the rooftop. Kai cooed in his arms and nudged Newt’s ear.

“Who do you think that is?” Tina said, pointing to the burned body. She was amazed the President, and all the Aurors, didn’t say anything about it. Almost like...

Tina strode up to the body.

“Tina?” Newt turned his head. When she started kicking the body Newt jumped up. “Tina! What are you doing—“

The body vanished. There wasn't even a mark on the roof from where it had laid.

Newt blinked. “Well then.”

“Something’s off,” Tina turned on her heel and marched towards the ashes. “Something is off, it has to be.”

Kai was trembling in Newt’s arms. Newt ran a thumb down the top of his head without thinking and Kai relaxed a little. Newt took a deep breath.

“Tina, I know you’re going—we just went through something very intense and—“

Tina spun on him. Her hands were fisted and her eyes flashed. Newt stepped back on instinct. Instead, Tina just kicked at the ashes. The cauldron pitched over with a lonely clang.

“What was this place?” Tina asked.

“Her workshop,” Newt said. When Tina gave him a look he said, “I came here earlier...today, actually.” It felt like ages ago now. He rose and grabbed her arm. “Stop, Tina. Just stop. You’ll burn yourself.”

“I can’t believe they took her away. They just—I was wrong. Was I wrong?” Tina turned. Her eyes shone as they met Newt’s and without thinking Newt gathered her in his arms, sending Kai scurrying onto his shoulders. Tina's arms banded around Newt and she sobbed.

“Let’s leave, okay?” Newt said softly. “Let’s get away from here.”
“I need to help people. I need to figure this out.”

“I know.” Newt kissed her forehead. “But rest is important too.”

“Newt...” she sighed. She dropped her head on his shoulder. “I don’t really want to go back to the apartment. Queenie, and Jacob, I just can’t deal with that right now.”

“That’s fine,” Newt brightened. “I still technically have a hotel room, so if you want we could—”

His words stopped, realizing how it sounded only after they left his mouth. Tina tensed in his arms. He coughed. “I could probably ask for a room with different modifications. For your privacy.”

Tina made a noise. At another time it might have been a laugh. She leaned back but kept her arms around him. “Mr. Scamander. I don’t think privacy is my biggest issue right now?”

“So...the hotel room is fine?”

She leaned in and kissed him quick. Her eyes were still too dark but she tried to smile as she said, “We’ll be fine.”

Kai head butted each of them in turn before he rose into the sky and vanished.

In the hotel lobby, Newt and Tina approached the window. The desk clerk glanced up and his eyes swept over Tina before he said, “Your room is booked for one person, sir. Not two.”

“She’s only here temporarily,” Newt said. When the clerk lifted an eyebrow Newt’s whole face burned red. “I mean, it’s just...I need a room change. One with separate bedrooms.”

“Well,” the clerk said.

Tina opened her wallet and slid a hundred dollars across the counter. The desk clerk gasped and snatched the money without question.

“I didn’t know the MACUSA tolerated bribery,” Newt tried joking as they approached the elevator.

“I guess I do a lot of unconventional things,” Tina replied, not smiling. “Things MACUSA normally wouldn’t do.”

Newt nodded and looked the other way. He passed the new room key back and forth between his hands. The elevator ticked by the floors at a snail's pace.

Newt glanced over at Tina. Tina was leaning back against the wall of the elevator with her eyes closed. She looked so utterly exhausted that he felt the need to hold her close, maybe even carry her to the room. He wouldn’t really mind it except he was also bone weary and was worried about dropping her.

“I thought about doing this before,” Tina said.

Newt started. “Pardon?”

“About coming to see you privately.”

“Oh,” Newt shifted his weight and shoved his hands in his pockets. “Well. So did I.”
Tina almost smiled, her eyes closed. “I hate this.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault.”

Newt exhaled and was glad when the doors opened. They wandered down the hall till they reached the right room and entered. It was a two bedroom, with a small furnace and sink and washstand. Newt reached into his pocket for his miniaturized suitcase. He waved his wand to return it to its original size.

“Did you have any other luggage?” Tina asked. When Newt looked confused Tina shook her head. “Never mind.”

Tina went out to peer out the window. The view of the night wasn’t that bad. The clock on the wall told them it was almost two AM. Newt hovered by the bed, too aware of its prominence between them.

“Well,” Newt said.

Tina continued to stare out the window, her eyes blurred without thoughts. Newt shifted his weight, almost in pain from wanting to help her and not knowing what to do. Instinct told him to hold her. But his brain told him Tina wanted to be alone and away from him.

“I might go into the case,” Newt finally said. “And tend to my creatures. Feel free to...I mean, if you need to sleep.”

“I might shower first.”

“Oh yes. That’s down the hallway.”

Tina eyed his suitcase. “You have a shower in there?”

Newt thought. When he traveled, he normally didn’t worry so much about bathing or cleanliness. He did have a sort of water hook he’d made to dump water over his head. He used the shower more for cleaning his creatures then himself. But if it would make her feel better, if it would take that hopeless look out of her eyes...

“One moment,” Newt said. He opened the case and descended inside.

Left in the bedroom, Tina sighed. She ran her hands over her face and braced herself against the window. She hated this awkwardness. It was not how she wanted their first time sharing a bedroom, a bed even, to be. Why couldn’t things be perfect right now? Instead he was acting like he could barely speak to her, and she had no idea how to proceed without violating his boundaries.

And at the same time she just wanted to be alone. She wanted to cry over her uselessness and how much she’d messed up. She wanted Newt to comfort her but Tina was used to being the rock, not the storm.

Newt’s head popped up from the case. His hair had somehow become drenched, as did half his shirt. A quick smile flashed on his face as he said, “The shower’s working.”

“I can see that,” Tina said. She’d been trying to be funny but Newt flinched slightly before ducking back into the case. Tina cursed and strode to the case and entered it.
In his workshop she smelled leather and herbs and animals, all of which was somehow more comforting than the fresh hotel room. When she opened the shack door, the creature’s sounds washed over her. The sky over the Kyran enclosure was glowing with stars. Dust sparkled golden in the air, illuminating the pathways. The youngest Graphorn was chasing one of the dung beetles and the Kneazle wove between her legs.

It was like a timeless space, untouched by the storm outside. And Tina thought she understood Newt even more.

Following his voice, she found Newt ankle deep in a pond that he’d just added. He was tossing small pellets into the water. Then he hopped a little and cursed.

“Are you okay?” Tina asked, coming forward.

“The little buggers keep tickling my feet,” Newt muttered. He moved out of the water. His feet were spotted with little red bites.

“Is that dangerous?” Tina asked.

“Oh no, they aren’t poisonous,” Newt shook off his feet. “They’re just a bit territorial.” He sat down with a towel to dry his feet. “Once they get used to me, though, I think I’ll be able to study them in depth.”

Tina stared. Her chest had loosened at some point, and something warm tickled the back of her throat. He turned to her. His hair was sticking up and his hazel eyes rounded.

“Tina?” he said. “You’re crying.”

Tina wiped her eyes. “Where’s the shower?”

Newt just pointed and Tina made her way over to a small wooden house. She braced herself for whatever rustic experience she’d find within. But when she opened the door, she gaped. The shower was more like a sauna, with a bench, a huge showerhead, and a small basket of colorful soaps. There was a separate changing area with two fluffy towels. A set of his pajamas sat next to the towels.

Tina heard him approach behind her.

“I did some work on it,” he said. “The pajamas are some of mine.”

She turned. He rubbed the back of his head and nodded. “So you can use this one and I’ll use the one down the hall—“

Tina jumped on him. She wasn’t exactly sure how but then her lips were attacking his. His hands clamped onto her back, maybe to catch his balance, but then his hands slid up her back and into her hair and his lips became as avid as hers. The cold in her chest burst into heat like a lightning flash. Kissing him chased the hopelessness away. He tilted his head, deepening the kiss, and Tina moaned with the feeling of being close, of being warm.

Newt pulled her back a little. His chest was rising and falling, straining at his shirt that was a bit damp. Tina wanted to kiss him right there where his shirt was open over his collarbones.

“I smell terrible,” Newt said. “We should shower before...I mean before we go to bed.”

“Okay,” Tina kissed his nose, enjoying the blurry look in his eyes. “Thanks.”
And then she turned and enclosed herself in the dressing area.

Indulging herself, she bent over so she could peer under the door. If she wasn’t wrong, there was a skip in Newt’s step as he moved off. She smiled.

It wasn’t perfect, Tina thought. But she’d make it work.

The shower was heaven. Tina could have spent an hour in there. It was so much better than the rib cage stall that she had at her own apartment. Even the occasional roar in the distance didn’t frighten her.

She slipped into the pajamas he’d left. They were made of soft red cotton. A little snug in the hips but otherwise fine. And they smelled like him. She fought the urge to bury her nose in the collar.

When she opened the door with her other clothes in hand, Newt was still gone.

Tina collected herself. Her fingers rubbed the hemline of the shirt. So, Newt seemed...enthusiastic. Her heart began to race. She didn’t know what he had in mind and that was it’s own thrill. Her first step was getting to the room and then she’d see where they ended up.

Getting back to the hotel room, though, she stopped.

Newt was passed out on the bed. His hair was still wet and it looked like he’d keeled over halfway through buttoning up his shirt. Not that Tina complained about seeing most of his muscular chest. And with a pleasant hum she realized he was wearing the same pajamas as hers, except his were green.

Tina locked the door. She sat on the edge of the bed and watched him sleep. With his arms and legs splayed out he took up most of the bed. He barely made a sound as he breathed.

She really didn’t want to wake him up to get under the covers. There was a spare blanket thrown on top of the chair in the room. She grabbed it and threw it over him, then hesitated.

He shifted in his sleep, turning towards the middle of the bed. The shirt slid down his shoulder a little. Tina felt her stomach lurch at the sight of his bare shoulder, the curve of muscle under freckled skin.

Carefully, she slid under the blanket and moved in right in front of him. Testing herself and him she reached out and brushed her hand through his hair. Besides a little shifting he didn’t wake.

Tina snuggled in closer. Her fingertips traced his nose, his cheeks. Before she could touch his mouth she pulled back. As much as she wanted to, something told her touching him while he slept was kind of weird.

Then Newt rolled, giving her his back and taking half the blanket with him. Tina gaped at his back. Seriously? He turned away from her? He was supposed to sense her close and wrap his arm around her or something. Why the hell would he turn away?

The clock showed three thirty A.M. Frustrated, Tina sighed and rolled onto her back. The ceiling had one large water stain. It was shaped a bit like a horse.

No longer distracted, Tina’s mind drifted back to the real problems at hand. But despite the obvious she had no idea how to prepare for the meeting with Picquery. She had no idea how to defend Moira because to all appearances Moira single-handedly destroyed two dragons and half the burrow with her magic storm.
I didn’t kill anyone. But he’s dead.

Tina shifted. She had a bad feeling that she knew who that ‘he’ was. After all, Moira had left with Declan. And that was the only person Tina could think of who would die and make Moira sad like that.

Sad and angry enough to unleash Obscurus like power.

Tina’s heart almost stopped. Was it possible that Moira had turned into an Obscurial? Just for a moment? That would be Picquery’s argument at least. And it would be enough to have Moira killed.

Oh God.

All the knots the shower had loosened returned in her chest and Tina turned onto her stomach to bury her head in the pillow. Next to her, Newt breathed in sharply. Tina turned her head to see Newt’s body shift, his head lifting. He was facing away from her as he said “Tina?”

“Yeah?”

Newt turned. His eyes were only half open and his smile was lazy. “Tina,” he said, and then his arm looped around her and pulled her close. He was back asleep in a few minutes.

Tina’s nose was right against Newt’s chest. One of his legs was tangled with hers. She could feel him breathing, the slow rhythm of his breath stirring her hair. It was like a cocoon. And despite herself she felt her mind begin to drift, sinking into his warmth, until she slept.

Tina woke to a loud buzzing. She groaned and tried to turn but found a band like steel keeping her in place. She shifted and the arm tightened.

Not any arm, she realized. She opened her eyes and saw nothing but pale, scarred skin. She craned up her head and nearly head-butted Newt’s chin. He was muttering as his eyes fluttered.

“Alarm,” he hissed. Then he buried his nose in Tina’s hair and inhaled. “Don’t want it.”

Tina’s whole body jerked awake as she found herself practically molded to him. His warmth surrounded her. His hips were almost aligned with hers and any movement would bring them dangerously closer.

“Newt,” Tina said.

“Mmm?”

“Ah, the alarm?”

She felt the moment he finally woke up because his entire body tightened at once. To his credit, though, he didn’t move his arm. She looked up. He met her gaze and his look was soft, half-lidded. Her heart thumped faster and the alarm faded to the background.

“Morning,” he said.

“Too early,” Tina replied. Her voice was scratchy.

His eyes darkened. His mouth was so close to hers. She could feel every inch of air and baric between them. And there wasn’t very much.
The alarm cut out. The air was hummed with silence.

“I like your pajamas,” Newt said. Tina smiled.

“I like yours.” Testing, she ran her hand around the collar of his shirt, shifting it a little away from his chest. Besides his sharp breath, though, he didn’t move. Tina smiled.


His mouth dove to hers. Tina gasped as his arm pressed her right against his body, shaping her against him. She’d never felt this kind of desire from him, so sudden and hot that she felt her own wanting burst alive and coat her. Her hands skimmed down his chest, over scars, to the small buttons.

Before she could undo them, though, Newt rolled, putting her under him as he deepened the kiss. And Tina felt her eyes roll back in her head. She didn’t notice he’d pinned her hands until she felt the pressure keeping her still.

Her eyes opened and he drew back. Goosebumps rose on her skin as she saw that look in his eyes. He surveyed her body. Tina almost squirmed. She felt too hot, her blood pumping too fast.

“Not enough time,” he almost growled. “Not enough.” Then he was kissing her again and his hands released hers to race down her body, to her breasts and Tina cried out as more sensations tightened at her core, setting her to aching. She needed more. His mouth, his hands. Everything.

And Newt seemed ready to give it. When his hand went to her shirt buttons, he looked at her in question.

“Yes,” Tina said.

“Thank God,” he said, and quickly undid them. Tina watched his reaction as he gently pulled the shirt away from her bare skin. Hunger filled his eyes. She couldn’t help arching slightly.

“I like my clothes on you,” Newt said. He kissed her jaw. “And you’re beautiful.” Tina closed her eyes as he kissed down her neck, her collarbones, as his fingers traced just under her breasts. She twisted, seeking some kind of friction from him, but then his hands were locked in hers again as his mouth moved slowly, so slowly down her body.

“Newt,” Tina breathed. “Please.”

“Maybe,” he kissed just under her breast. She was about to whine before he finally sucked her breast into his mouth and Tina arched into him, her moan slicing the air. Still his rhythm was slow, too slow, when all Tina wanted was to fly. His mouth went to her other breast, his tongue circling, squeezing. Tina squirmed her hips against his and was shocked when he reciprocated, moving against her enough to drive her insane. Heat built fast. She pulled against his hold, wanting to touch him, but his grip tightened and he moaned.

She didn’t know if she was shocked or embarrassed when he made her come with just his mouth and hands. As pleasure swamped her body she felt him go still over her. Her eyes cracked open to meet his wide, wondering gaze.

“Did you...” he swallowed. “I mean.” And then he was kissing her again, breathing her in, his hands locking at her hair and waist.
He was heavy against her. He’d let her hands go and Tina wasted no time scraping her nails down his chest, then his stomach, watching him gasp and brace himself. When her hand skimmed over his erection his eyes blurred.

“There’s time,” Tina said. Then her hand went to work on him. She enjoyed watching his cheeks flush, watching as he strained to keep himself from losing his place over her and his muscles trembled with control. Tina kissed his lips, focusing on making him groan, whimper. Everything.

By the time the second alarm went off, Newt was half collapsed on top of her, gasping, and Tina was glowing.

Till she turned her head and said. “Is that the time?”

Newt jerked up on his elbows, his head whipping to the side. “Bugger.”

There was a sort of mad dash then. Tina finding her clothes, using her wand to fix her hair and face and trying not to laugh as Newt bobbled on his feet when he stood, trying to get into his shirt and putting it on backwards.

“I’m starving,” Newt said.

“There’s a breakfast downstairs.” Tina got her boots on. “We’ll Apparate to MACUSA.”

When they were dressed, though, both paused. It was weird to feel awkward after being intimate, but Tina knew it was probably normal. She came over to his side and kissed him quickly. His arm wrapped around her waist.

“Do you mind if I ask,” Tina said against his shoulder. “Where that came from?”

When Newt drew back with confusion, Tina flicked her eyes towards the rumpled bed. Newt blushed.

“I just wanted you,” Newt took a deep breath. “Sorry. I wasn’t polite about it.”

Tina just laughed and pulled him towards the door.

Downstairs, then did indeed find a breakfast. She and Newt wolfed down some bagels when a bellboy came over.

“Telegram and package for Mr. Scamander.”

“Thanks,” Newt said. He took the package and opened the telegram. Tina sipped her coffee and set the cup down as Newt’s face paled.

“Bad news?” Tina said.

Newt just passed the telegram over and tore into the package. Tina read it to herself.

*If Moira with MACUSA, plan is working. Stop. Read the black book. Stop. Save the final ingredient. Stop.*

~A well wisher

“How...” Tina mused while Newt turned a small, worn, black book in his hands. The spine and pages looked ready to dissolve. It had no title.
There was a shiny red bookmark sticking off one page. Newt opened the book, careful of the spine, and Tina turned her chair to peer inside.

Her eyes rounded as she saw an image of a Spirit Seal on the ground. The book seemed hand written and then charmed to move. Despite its age the ink was dark and crisp. She couldn’t read the script, but then on the same page was a small note that looked recently written in scratchy English.

“The Spirit Seal,” Tina said. “It says how it’s made!”

“The final ingredient,” Newt said. He tried to control himself as he flipped the note over. “What is the final ingredient?”

Tina turned the page and stopped. The next picture showed the Seal on the ground, and a woman floating in the air above it. Haphazard lines swirled out and around the woman, zipping and swirling like fire around her. Tina couldn’t help thinking of Moira breaking the Seal in the warehouse. Next to the image someone had written in,

*The Spirit Walker alone survives. Without her, everything dies.*


“I thought they had gone extinct,” Newt said. “Even among wizards.”

Silence hung between them for a moment.

“We need to take this with us,” Tina said. She checked her watch and grimaced. “And we need to leave. Now.”

Newt closed the book and tucked it into his coat. They made it out of the lobby in seconds and were soon in front of MACUSA, weaving through the lobby. Tina was shocked to find the chaos clock leveled on green. People milled about. She heard snatches of conversation.

“...Obliviating all night, barely slept myself...”

“...Caught the suspect, interrogating her...”

“It feels over, I think it’s over.”

Then Tina stopped as the President’s private secretary intercepted them. The secretary grabbed Newt and Tina’s arms and they Apparated directly. They landed in a narrow, dark hallway that Tina knew led to the interrogation rooms. The secretary walked in front. She said nothing. Newt took Tina’s hand and squeezed. She squeezed back.

The secretary opened a door and waved for them to enter. Inside was one large table. There were four chairs in total, but they were lined against the wall.

Tina turned. “Are we being—“

The secretary closed the door.

Newt and Tina exchanged a look. This room had a mirror on one wall and a door on the other side.

“What’s going to happen?” Newt said.

“I couldn’t say,” Tina sighed. “They didn’t take our wands, so protocol would be that we’re non-dangerous witnesses.”
Tina grabbed a chair and sat down on one side of the table. Newt sat next to her. And they waited for the door to open.

When it did, they both jumped out of their chairs, as President Picquery strode in.

“Madame President,” Tina started. “Please, let me explain...”

“Let me explain, Miss Goldstein, what has taken place in the last six hours. So you can appreciate the situation in its entirety.”

Tina exchanged a look with Newt. His face was flushed down to his neck and his hands were shoved deep in his pockets. Tina sat and he followed.

The President sank into the other chair across from them. She settled her robes, then crossed her hands on her lap. She began.

“The No Majs needed to be Obliviated, and the entire neighborhood rebuilt. But the job was so massive that exposure was eminent. Not to mention, No Majs in the area who already knew about magic had gone underground to avoid Obliviation. I was forced to make a difficult deal. The Falcons offered their assistance in finding the No Majs to be Obliviated. We took it.”

“You took their deal?” Tina slammed her hands on the table. “President Picquery, the Falcons were the ones with the dragons in the first place!”

“I’m not finished,” the President said.

Tina sat back as if slapped. Newt’s hand pressed against her elbow, a sign of unity and a warning.

“The Falcons will be tried for their crimes,” the President said. “But not at this moment. For now we make them think we’re placated. And we have the No Majs under control, and the burrow being rebuilt as we speak.”

“So,” Newt said after a pause. “Where does that leave Miss Byrne?”

The President clasped her hands on top of the table. Her clear eyes moved between Tina and Newt. Her voice did not rush, as diligent and smooth as a river.

“At first, we blamed Miss Byrne for most of the damage in the ward. Further research however revealed that despite her massive release of power, the only real destruction she caused was to a grand church steeple and the killing of the dragons. The magic did not directly kill anyone else.”

“But your Aurors—“

“Were trapped in the steeple wreckage, and were recovered. Injured, but alive.”

“Oh,” Tina glanced at Newt. Newt was still tense, his gaze on the table narrowed as he listened. He was braced for a punch. So was Tina.

“So, why do you still have Moira under arrest?” Tina asked.

“I have read your report many times, Miss Goldstein. And it has become apparent to me that Miss Byrne is a massive security threat to our country. Maybe, even, to Wizard kind.”

“But she saved the burrow!” Newt said. “If what your research said was true.”
“I said that Goldstein's report sent yesterday made me see her as a threat,” the President said. “Not the events of last night.”

Tina was about to throw her hands in the air but restrained herself. She’d heard the President liked to speak in riddles but must she be doing it now of all times?

“What made you think so?” Newt asked in his soft, even voice.

The President snapped her fingers and a file appeared on the table. The President tapped it with her wand and it opened to reveal what Tina recognized as the Tocapanski file. The image of Liam’s body lay on top.

Only, it was different, because someone had added in more pages.

When Tina looked up, the President spoke. “This case is one that I still remember. One from Mr. Tocapanski’s few failures. In it was a strange case of incredibly old and dark magic. And according to the file, the one who opened the Seal and killed the No Majs was never caught.”

Tina’s head snapped up. “You can’t possibly think Moira—“

“Do not interrupt me, Miss Goldstein,” the President snapped, temper finally rising in her voice. Again Tina sat back.

“How much do you know about Seals, Miss Goldstein?” Picquery asked.

“I know what I’ve seen and what you’ve told me.”

“And what has Miss Byrne told you?”

“That they’re dangerous, and that she can stop them.”

“Did you ever wonder why she can stop them?” the President asked.

“Of course, but...”

“You wanted the Seals gone, and were willing to overlook that fact.” The President's eyes flashed. “I am not going to judge you for that, Miss Goldstein. But our priorities have changed.”

The President waved her hand again and this time the pages in the files rippled, the words shifting and blurring until new words filled the pages.

“This is the confidential file,” the President’s eyes were opaque. “We prevented Tocapanski’s investigation from finding how the Seal was created, so not even Tocapanski knows about this. Within is everything we know about how Seals are formed.”

Tina didn’t dare touch the pages. Newt looked especially uncomfortable.

“Since you seem reluctant to read, I'll explain,” the President said dryly. “A Spirit Seal isn’t just a potion you pour on the floor. It requires a very specific chain of events to be activated to its full potential.”

Tina thought of the black book, the image of the woman above the floor. The last ingredient.

“Well obviously,” Newt said. “It would require a witch or wizard to activate it.”

“Exactly.” The President pushed the file towards Tina. “And yet, not. You see a Spirit Seal requires
the sacrificing of souls to be given power. Who does that sacrificing is insubstantial.”

“That’s why No Maj’s were killed.” Tina said, looking up. “And why we can’t find their bodies. As I explained in my report.” Tina was still trying to find the barbs the President would use against Moira. Waiting for the surprise to slap her in the face.

“But why did this happen?” the President tapped the picture Tina was all too familiar with. Liam’s body in the Seal. Tina brushed the picture before she could help herself.

“I’m guessing you’re going to tell us.” Newt said.

“You see, getting the Seal to activate is not a problem,” the President said. “It’s controlling it afterwards. A Seal will consume anything living in sight if activated improperly. The Seal is powerful enough to steal souls right out of a mortal’s body and feed on their life force until they die. As it did to this young man.”

“Like a Dementor’s kiss,” Newt said with horror. When the President nodded Tina asked, “How do you know all of this?”

“Because as President I have access to knowledge the average wizard should not. Except for Miss Byrne, of course.”

“So you have to control the Seal,” Newt said quickly. “How do you do that?”

“You would need someone who the Seal could not harm, because the witch would be able to repel the spirits and control them. To use them for her own devices.”

“A Spirit Walker,” Tina whispered. “But I thought they were extinct?”

“Yes. I’d thought we’d killed them off as well.”

“Killed them off?” Newt said.

“A Spirit Walker is a dangerous being, Mr. Scamander. They can draw power from spirits and manipulate dark magic that most wizards can’t. They also, most ominously, can draw power from other people’s pain and suffering.”

Tina’s heart stopped. The pages fell from her hands and Tina’s eyes lifted to meet the President’s depthless gaze.

And Tina felt so stupid. The answer had been obvious before her eyes.

“So now you see,” the President said. “Why we can’t let that girl walk free.”

Moira was tired of the metal chair. She was tired of people sticking their wands against her head. She was tired of feeling like she was burning, the pain, and the confusion of feeling ice creep under her skin when she knew it was just a wand hand hexing her or whatever it was.

But most of all, she was tired of people hitting the table in front of her. She’d started counting two Aurors back and was now at 148.

The current Auror demanded, “Why, Miss Byrne, will the memory retrieval charms not work on you?”
“I don’t know.” A lie.

“No wizard is able to block themselves from memory retrieval. Especially not one your age!”

“I would say that’s wrong, then.”

He smacked the table. 149. “You are in no position to be sassy, Miss Byrne.”

Moira closed her eyes. While the man kept yelling, she imagined Kai perched on top of her home. She’d walk up the fire escape and little Peter would come out, sword drawn, smiling up at her… except it wasn’t Peter but Declan, his full lips turned up just slightly as he held out a rough hand to take hers. Kai would land on her shoulder, and they’d watch the sun set.

A dream that would never come true.

“Oh, Miss Byrne?”

She opened her eyes and had to blink back tears to see the Auror’s face inches from hers. He sneered. “Am I boring you?”

“No.” Though if they gave her back her knives, things would be more interesting.

“Good. That’s good,” the Auror smiled. “Otherwise, I was thinking of doing this.” He grabbed her head and slammed it in to the table.

When Moira regained consciousness, someone was opening the door. Moira didn’t bother lifting her head.

“Another round of torture, then?” Moira said.

“Not exactly.”

It was a woman’s voice, cold and commanding, and Moira lifted her head. Then snapped to attention.

“Holy shit,” Moira said

President Picquery closed the door and remained standing, regarding her. Moira felt self-conscious. She knew her lips were cracked and scabbed. Judging by the throbs, one of her eyes was going to swell. Not to mention her hair that one Auror had yanked around till her scalp bled. Moira’s arms were littered with scratches from where she’d thought spiders had been crawling under her skin, only to find out it had been an illusion.

“We’re going to try a new tactic with you, Miss Byrne,” the President said. She swept forward, her black robes rustling on the cold cement floor. Even in the clammy light her headdress gleamed.

The president waved her wand. A glass of water appeared in front of Moira.

Moira sat back. She could practically hear Declan’s voice in her head. First they hurt you, Mo. Then they bring a balm. Never trust the balm.

“Well, you’ve already tried a few things,” Moira lifted one bruised hand, counted off her fingers. “Memory removal, drowning, that weird torture curse, then the usual Legilimency. What’s next? Poison? Maybe some hypnosis?”
“No,” the President crossed her legs. Her face was devoid of humor. “I’m just going to ask you to tell me about what you can do.”

Moira watched her a few moments. “I don’t understand the question.”

“It wasn’t a question.”

Moira just rolled her eyes to the ceiling and waited. A few minutes of silence passed.

*She thinks she can wait me out, Moira thought. But her silence has nothing on Declan’s.*

Just thinking his name sent pain ripping through her chest.

The President finally sighed.

“Do you know what you are, Miss Byrne? I mean what you really are?”

“I’m sure you’ll tell me.”

“No,” the President leaned forward. “I want to hear it in your words.”

Moira thought on it a moment. What she’d give to read minds right now. Instead, she looked up at the President, and let her eyes relax a bit. The President’s body wavered to reveal the aura and spirit inside her. It was a flashing gold, no surprise for someone who held a lot of power. Right now, though, green pulsed through the frame.

Moira blinked. “You’re…being earnest.”

“You can tell?” the President’s eyes narrowed. “How?”

The pulses shifted, then, and she saw the maroon hidden behind the green.

“Why do you want to know, Madame President?” Moira asked. “Is it so you can use me for your own devices?”

“Moira,” the President shook her head. "Do you have any idea how incredible you are?”

That threw Moira for a second. The President continued. “You’re powers of Occlumency are some of the most advanced I have ever seen, even in witches twice your age. Why is that?”

“I grew up around nosy people.” Moira did not like that glow in the President’s eye. It was like the leader was looking at an incredibly rare creature, rather than a human being.

“You’re a bit nosy yourself, you know,” the President said. “That aura reading trick of yours is quite developed. Our experts think you must have practiced that for years to master it so well.”

Moira started counting the scratches in the table as the President continued. “And all that doesn’t even begin to cover the Spirit Walking.”

Moira felt her blood stop at those words. Spirit Walking. It had been so long since someone had called it that.

“You’re an impressively powered witch, Moira Byrne.” The President said. “And I know for a fact that you could use those markings on your arms to break out of here. And yet you are honorable enough not to.”
Moira was done with the bullshit. “What do you want, Madame President?”

The President leaned closer, her eyes piercing as Kai’s when he was judging someone’s worth. “I know you’re a Spirit Walker, Moira. That means that without you, the Spirit Seals can’t be activated. Without you, the Falcons ultimate goals will be thwarted. Even if there weren’t Falcons and Seals, a Spirit Walker is a danger to all wizard and No Maj life. That’s good enough reason to have you executed.”

Moira said nothing.

The President tsked and leaned forward. “Do you hear what I’m saying? We could have you killed, Moira.”

“I’ll be killed out there,” Moira tilted her head. “Or I’ll be killed in here. It all ends the same way.”

“Then tell us what you can do,” the President urged. “Help us understand you. Give us a reason to let you live.”

Moira almost smiled. Give them a reason to let her live? Who needed a reason to let someone live?

“Because if you don’t,” the President drew her wand. “Then by my authority, I can end you right here. No trial, and no jury. As befits a danger to humanity.”

Moira felt so cold inside seeing the end of that wand between her eyes. So she thought of other things. She thought of Declan’s face when he laughed, of Kai’s feathers, her rooftop home. Her mother and brother. All gone.

“I don’t think you understand me, Madame President,” Moira said. The President’s eyes flickered as Moira leaned forward. “I know you don’t care about such things, Madame President, but my whole family is dead. The few I love who are alive are better off without me. And I don’t want to be used, or hurt, anymore. So please.” Moira pressed forward till the wand tip was right between her eyes. “Just end it now.”

“Very well,” the President said.

Moira took a deep, clean breath. She felt like she could sense the oxygen passing through every vein and vessel. She felt the wand heat, felt the President’s magic gather.

And then the door behind the President burst open and she heard Tina scream “NO!”

Chapter End Notes

So...I’m fixing things? I think? Let me know what you think! and as usual thanks for the reads :) ~lize
Sacrifice and Resolution

Chapter Summary

Where Newt and Tina have to convince Moira again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Just after the president left the room, the window in Newt and Tina’s room lit up. That was the only way Tina could describe it at first, until she peered through the glass, and saw Moira sitting at a metal table with her hands chained.

Newt’s sharp intake of breath was mirrored by Tina’s gasp. Moira’s skin was scratched, bruised, and in some places still bleeding. She still wore the scorched clothes from the night before. The worst part for Tina, though, were Moira’s eyes. There was no light, no hope in those flat irises. It was like staring into a cold shadow.

And despite Tina’s revelation of what Moira was, and what she could do, all Tina saw was a battered and frightened girl.

Both Tina and Newt had seen the president come in and sit. They couldn’t hear what was said. Newt tried a spell or two to remedy that but each backfired. So they watched in tense silence. Tina felt like the air in her chest was expanding out and out, tightening her lungs.

When the president had placed her wand against Moira’s head, Tina couldn’t move.

When Moira leaned into the wand, into death, Tina wasn’t aware she had moved.

Until the door before her burst apart. Until she launched herself down the hallway, Newt shouting after her. Until she was at the right door. Tina flung that one open and when she was finally processing what she’d done, Tina was between the president’s wand and Moira.

Newt froze in the doorway. His wand was still out and he was breathing fast. All color left his face as his eyes darted from the president’s wand, to Tina’s face, back to Moira, then back to the wand.

“Miss Goldstein,” the president said. “Move.”

“She’s not a threat, Madame President, please,” Tina said. Her voice was more of a scrape then a tone. Behind her, Moira’s hand closed on Tina’s arm and yanked. Tina resisted, not caring if the girl was trying to move her out of the way or closer to the wand.

“I’ve heard you say that before, Miss Goldstein,” the president’s voice was cold. “I told you what this girl is. How she could wreak destruction. She’s a danger to our society.”

“I’m not sure, Madame President,” Newt said quietly. “From where I’m standing, you look pretty dangerous yourself.”

“Silence, Scamander,” the president said, but Tina saw the fissure of uncertainty in the president’s grip on her wand. Then those regal eyes were back on her, and Tina thought she’d imagined the
uncertainty. The silence stretched for a few heartbeats.

“Argue for her,” the president said.

Tina gaped. "What?"

“Argue why should Moira Byrne be kept alive.”

Tina's mind went blank. “Madame President...”

Behind her, Moira muttered something. When the president asked her to repeat, Moira said louder, “that’s not fair.”

“Not fair?” the president glowered. “I’m letting her argue for your life and that’s not fair?”

Moira hissed. Her grip on Tina was a claw now. Tina felt the girl's nails biting into her skin.

“I’m not their responsibility,” Moira spat. "It’s not fair to ask them.”

At Moira’s words, Tina’s pulse rushed faster. Not her responsibility? What was Moira talking about? Moira was innocent. Of course she was Tina’s responsibility. And she’d suffered enough. Thoughts of Credence invaded Tina’s mind but for the first time she didn’t shove them away. She let that remembered pain remain, let it fill her chest so the truth would be shining in her eyes.

“Defend her, Miss Goldstein,” the president said. The grip on her wand shifted. “Or I end her now.”

“She’s innocent,” Tina stated. Her heart thrummed with that truth. It was that truth that made Tina’s voice steady, made her heart slow.

“She’s a Spirit Walker.” The president said. “You can’t possibly know what she’s done.”

“I know she is innocent,” Tina said. She thought of Declan, the young man’s utter trust in Moira’s abilities. “I know she...I know a lot of people have failed her, and she still hasn’t given up. I know I failed her.” Tina felt Moira’s hand soften on her arm, kept going. “And I regret it. So I can’t fail her now.”

“And if you’re wrong?” the president said.

Tina took a deep breath. “My job as an Auror is to defeat dark magic, and protect innocent lives. I believe her innocent. If you fire me for protecting her, then at least I’ve done my job right.”

The challenge was like a grenade with the pin half-pulled. Tina would not look away from the president. The president did not look away from her. In the doorway Newt was statue still as if afraid even movement would set violence into action. Tina heard Moira’s breathing behind her, the shallow and quick rhythm like a sick dog.

The president lowered her wand.

The air seemed to thin at the movement. Tina’s knees almost gave out. She braced one hand on the table to keep her balance.

The president straightened her robes, setting her wand in the loop within. Then she took one step back from the table. Newt moved into the room and out of her way. He went instantly to Tina's side, his hand seeking her's. Tina kept watching the president. The president halted in the door frame. She lifted her chin and stated,
“You have one hour.”

“To what?” Newt asked.

“What must be done.” The president’ hand closed on the door knob. Without looking at them she said, “These old doors. So much has passed, and yet so few know.”

Then the door slammed shut behind her.

After a moment, Newt said, “Is it over?”

Tina spun on Moira. The girl's hand slid off Tina's arm and fell to her lap. Moira stared blankly at the table.

“What were you thinking?” Tina demanded. "Leaning into her wand like that, do you have a death wish?"

Moira avoided her gaze and crossed her arms on top of the table. Tina couldn’t help noticing the welts and burns on the girl’s fair skin. Tina softened her voice. “What happened to you?”

Moira still didn’t speak.

Newt came over and almost sat in the chair across from Moira. Instead he took the chair and pulled it closer to Moira’s side before sitting. He leaned his elbows on his knees.

“So, what now?” he said to Moira.

Moira’s eyes flickered. She shook her head.

Tina gave Newt a look. Newt returned it with a small, reassuring smile, before resuming an almost businesslike tone. “We’re waiting, Moira. What happens now?”

“Why are you asking me?” Moira whispered.

“Because we need your help.”

“I tried that,” Moira narrowed her eyes at the wall. “And look where we all are.”

“Moira,” Newt started, stopped. Then his words just rushed out. “I am so sorry.”

Moira wavered. Newt continued in a shaking voice. “I am so sorry that we brought you into this. I am sorry that I did nothing when they took you away, and I am sorry that I didn’t protect you the way that I should have. To be completely honest, it’s not fair for us to ask you for more help. But I have to make up what I did wrong.”

“You can’t help me,” Moira stated.

“You don’t know that.”

“You can’t bring them back,” Moira’s voice shivered. “My home. My workshop. The books my mother left behind, and the pillows my brother bought for me, and my plants and Kai and Dec—“ but before she said his name Moira’s voice dissolved completely. It was like the dam burst. Tears flooded out of her eyes. She bent over the table with her gut-wrenching sob. “I can’t bring them back.”

Tina moved forward but hesitated from touching Moira. She glanced at Newt helplessly. Newt
looked just as lost. Then Tina realized what Moira had listed.

"Kai," Tina said blankly. Moira thought Kai was dead. But the creature obviously wasn't. So, could that mean...

Newt realized it as well. He cleared his throat.

“Uh, well actually,” Newt swallowed hard. “Kai is alive.”

Moira’s spine went rigid. Her eyes lifted, wide and wary as a wolf’s. All she said was,

“Excuse me?”

“Newt,” Tina said with warning. Newt nodded, but kept his level gaze on Moira. He spoke slowly.

“Kai is alive. Though I’m not sure where he is now.” Newt reached into his pocket and pulled out the black book. “And I’m not sure if this is one of your mother’s books...”

Moira’s reaction was instant. She cringed back so far that the chains on her wrists went taunt. Her nostrils flared.

“Where did you get that?” she demanded.

“It was sent to me yesterday,” Newt said. “It told us about—“

“Where did you get that?”

Newt silenced as Moira’s breathing sped up. Color returned to her face with a vengeance, making her eyes glitter with something unhinged. Her hands scrambled out, snatched the book, but it was in her grip for only a breath before she flung it across the room.

“Moira!” Tina cried. But the girl was almost hyperventilating now. Magic pulsed around her hands. Without a thought Tina grabbed Moira’s hands in her own. The girl’s skin was ice cold. Moira tried to pull away, but Tina just held on tighter, and kept holding on as Moira rocked back and forth.

“I don’t understand this,” Moira sobbed. “I don’t understand.”

“What is this book, Moira?” Newt asked. Tina sent him a sharp look and she saw his mind working, seeking a new tactic. Then his eyes alighted on an idea. When he spoke again, his words were even more deliberate.

“What about Peter?”

At the name, Moira’s entire being stilled in Tina’s arms. Tina blinked, looked from Newt to Moira.

“Who’s Peter?”

Newt pressed forward. “Moira, Peter needs you alive. He needs you to be brave, and protect him, because without you he will have no one to keep him safe.”

“But...” Moira’s voice was barely audible. “If I’m dead...”

Tina shivered at Moira's tone, the obvious want in the girl's words. She couldn't imagine what the Aurors must have done, to make Moira think...

“And Mr. O’Connor,” Newt said almost desperately. “He cares about you. And who’s going to fix
Cassie’s wounds, or take care of Kai, or—“

“Brew the tonic for the Fitzgerald’s baby?” Tina said. When Newt nodded fast, Tina continued, “think of the names in your ledger, Moira. All those people you’ve helped. Those people need you.”

“And we do,” Newt took a deep breath. “Moira, I know my word isn’t much, but if you were to die, and I could’ve prevented it...I can’t live through that again.”

“I can’t either,” Tina whispered. The look she and Newt shared was filled with unspoken sadness.

Moira’s breathing quieted. Her shoulders began to unwind, and she leaned away from Tina. Tina watched Moira carefully before releasing her hands. The girl wiped her nose. Took a few deep breaths. Tina swore she felt the girl’s magic settle.

When Moira opened her eyes, they were calm. Almost too much so.

“Can you bring the book to me?” Moira asked quietly.

Tina waved her wand and the book floated to sit in front of Moira. Moira looked at it with something between wonder and disgust before opening it. She ran her fingers down the inside cover. A handwritten inscription rose from the cream cover, its black and swirling font too warped for Tina to understand. Moira's eyes lingered on the words.

“Spirit Walking has been in my family for generations,” Moira finally said. “My mum gave me this book before we left. She said she was going to teach me how to control the Walking when she came, but she never came.” More tears filled her voice but did not fall. “It was just me and Liam, and then Markus found out what I could do and he wanted to use me. But Liam wouldn’t let him, so he died. Declan promised Liam that he’d protect me, but then he...”

“Moira, honey,” Tina shook her head. “You can’t blame yourself for that.”

“Oh, I think I can,” Moira’s eyes flashed. “Since I’m the person they’re dying for.”

Newt was at a loss for words. Or rather, he had no idea how to explain the truth of an idea he barely understood himself. Which left it up to Tina.

In Tina’s lifetime, she had lost too many people close to her. She tried to remember, when she lost her parents, what she wished people had said to her. At the time it felt like that pain was impossible to withstand. Like no one’s words, no matter how well meaning, really meant anything. Without Queenie to take care of, Tina didn’t know what she would have done. What shadows she would have fallen in to.

Tina took Moira’s face in her hands and turned the girl gently towards her. Tina recognized that haunted, almost starving look in Moira’s eyes. The girl was grappling for something solid. Something withstanding. So Tina decided to go for truth. Tina waited for Moira to look at her before she spoke.

“Moira. We don’t get to choose the people that sacrifice for us.”

Moira’s eyes rounded. Tina was surprised when she felt her own throat constrict, and had to breathe to keep her tears locked in. “We don’t get to choose. I wish we could, and it's hard to accept when you feel alone or abandoned, but you have to understand...sacrificing for someone you love is one of the most powerful things a person can do. And thinking those people shouldn’t have helped, when they loved you so much, is a scar to their memory.”

Moira’s hands drifted up to close around Tina's wrists. Tina did not look away. “Your mother,
brother, and Declan, decided that you were worth protecting. They were brave for you. Now it’s time for you to be brave for someone else.”

When Tina finished speaking she felt drained. Like just the words had taken a few years off her life. And she had no idea if she explained it right, or if such things could really be explained anyway.

Moira moved. She removed Tina’s hands from her face with a gentle touch. Then, she gathered herself, and rose from her chair.

Tina and Newt rose as well. Quick as a heartbeat Newt brushed his hand over Tina’s cheek. His fingertips came back wet and Tina rubbed her eyes quickly before taking his hand in her’s.

“I know a spirit who can help us,” Moira said.

A smile burst across Newt’s face. Tina’s chest loosened.

"But first," Moira scowled. "I want my knives back."

“Knives?” Then Tina remembered. “Your fighting knives?”

“Some Auror took them,” Moira’s lips pulled up into a snarl. “And my coat. I want my damn coat and my damn knives, and then we’re going to go talk to some spirits.”

Chapter End Notes

I wonder which Auror took Moira’s knives muahaha
Anyway, sorry for the slow update! I had to break this next bit up into smaller sections to avoid a humongous chapter.
Thanks for the reads! Do comment :3
~lize
The door to the interrogation room, the one the President had slammed closed, was unlocked.

Tina and Newt exchanged a look but Moira didn’t even pause. She pulled the door open wide and gestured for Tina to leave first. Tina peered left and right, but saw no one.

“Do you remember which Auror has your knives?” Newt asked quietly despite the empty hall.


“A lot of Aurors match that description,” Tina muttered. But she wasn’t worried. All evidence from prisoners was kept in the same place. It was just a matter of getting there without being noticed.

Tina glanced back. Moira was attempting to pull a snag from her smoky hair, and Newt was wavering forward as if to offer assistance. Then Moira yanked her hand and a piece of metal emerged from the tangled mess. Moira regarded it curiously. Newt gaped.

“How about you two meet me outside?” Tina suggested.

“Sure,” Moira said.

Newt waivered. Tina smiled, though, and said, “I’ll find you. Don’t worry.”

“I won’t,” Newt said. But he lingered still. With a glance back to Moira, he stepped a little closer to her.

“Newt, I said—“

“I know.” He almost smiled. “I just thought you should know that you aren’t to blame either.”

Tina’s throat tightened and she could only hold his soft gaze. And as she looked in those glowing hazel eyes, Tina realized a few things she really didn’t have time to think about.

“Go,” she said.

Newt wrapped his arm around Moira and Apparated.

Tina squared her shoulders and made her way further into the interrogation area. The evidence holding room was only a few hallways over yet it felt like she was crossing some unknown jungle. Anyone could be a threat. She felt like every shadow was coming to drag her back into a holding cell.

The only problem, though, was that there was no shadows. The more she walked, the more Tina
realized that no one was in the halls. No one in the rooms. The other Auror’s offices stood like
tombs.

It made her skin crawl.

When she finally reached evidence holding, Tina was almost shocked to see Miss Phyllis standing at
the desk. Shocked, and way too relieved.

Miss Phyllis looked over her fuschia, cat-eye glasses and said, “You shouldn’t be here.”

Tina almost froze but kept her step even, her voice smooth. “What do you mean?”

“All Aurors have been called in for an emergency meeting.” Phyllis held up a piece of parchment.
“Picquery’s orders.”

Tina took the page and scanned it. It said what Phyllis told her and very little else. The time stamp for
was less than an hour ago.

*You have an hour.*

Tina checked the clock. Since the President had uttered those words, it had been about...thirty
minutes. So did they have an hour to escape, or that much time till the President sent the Auror’s after
them? For all Tina knew, the meeting was about tracking her and Newt down.

Phyllis coughed and Tina came back to herself. She held the notice tighter to her chest and said, “I
need to pick up some belongings.”

“You need to get to that meeting,” Phyllis countered.

“I will,” Tina rolled her eyes. “Since the evidence is for the meeting.”

Phyllis blushed and muttered. “You could have started with that, then.” Then Phyllis leaned forward
a little, her eyes sparkling.“It’s about that Irish girl, huh? The tall ’n scrawny one.”

“The same girl,” Tina said.

“I heard she wiped out that neighborhood,” Phyllis pressed. “Heard some other nasty things too.”

“Phyllis, could you just get me her things? The name’s ‘Moira Byrne’.”

Phyllis watched Tina for a moment. Tina resisted the urge to straighten her hair. Then Phyllis turned
on her heel and went through the back door.

Tina tapped her foot. Checked the wall clock again. Another five precious minutes gone.

Not that Tina had an idea what would happen when the hour was up. Or where she was going to
take Moira next, considering she was breaking out a criminal...though if the President was
technically the one to let them out...

The meeting notice felt like a pound of bricks in Tina’s hand.

The door opened. Phyllis came out with a soft parcel. She began to unwrap it as she spoke. “It still
smells like a rotten campfire. But I remember what came in.” Phyllis handed over the records for the
documents. Tina took them and Phyllis continued. “Not really much, to be honest. Just an army issue
coat and two dueling knives.”
Tina picked up the coat. It was heavier than she expected, though it didn’t rattle as it usually did.

“Did someone clean out the pockets, Phyllis?”

“They did. Found nothing.”

Interesting. Tina stored that away. Then she saw the flash of silver and gems and turned her attention to the knives. She’d seen Moira use them many times—and not use them, also many times—but this close Tina was able to admire them. Tina grasped one by the hilt, lifted it to the light. It was also heavier than she expected. The entire weapon was about as long as her forearm, with the blade making up most of the length. The hilt was engraved with words in another language—a stark, oxidized black against the silver. Small rubies sat at the butt of the knives.

“Beautiful things, those,” Phyllis murmured. “I haven’t seen generation knives like that in many years.”

“But you have seen them?” Tina said.

Phyllis nodded. A flicker of pain in her eyes. “Such magical objects are passed from generation to generation. My father had one. A Seventh generation knife. But such weapons aren’t allowed in America.”

Tina didn’t say anything for a moment. Phyllis shook her head and said, “So sign the record and be on your way, huh?”

Phyllis laid the paperwork down and then vanished to the back. Tina picked up the roster. The name above her’s, the Auror who had checked the evidence in, gave her pause. Even with all the ridiculous flourishes in the signature, she could make out the “R” and “Hay.”

Tina was still smiling when she walked out the door with her prizes, imagining Robert’s face when he was told his evidence was missing.

Tina found Newt and Moira in the alley behind MACUSA. Moira wore the hat that Newt had conjured for himself once, expanded a bit to take in all of her hair and to hide her face. Seeing her coat in Tina’s arms, Moira’s face lit up, if only a little. In the light of day though Tina could see the girl’s wounds way too clearly.

“You’re okay,” Newt started towards Tina. Tina smiled then shoved the coat into Moira’s arms.

“This coat is filthy,” Tina said.

Moira just shrugged it on. With a twist of her wrists, the knives flew from Tina’s hands to Moira’s. Moira twirled them around her fingers a few times. The silver flashed in the light.

“They’re beautiful,” Tina offered.

“They’ve been in the Byrnes for six generations.” Moira kissed each blade before sliding them into their secret coat compartments. “Passed from my father to me. It drove Liam insane.”

“Are such weapons normally passed from father to son?” Newt asked as they headed into the crowds. The sun beat down on their heads, a welcome break from the days of rain and freezing. Children were laughing. Christmas bells rang out from the shops. Women with baby carriages bustled by alongside business people with their hats lifted to take in the glittering shop windows.
Tina could barely reconcile the innocent cheer with what she knew was happening in her world.

“Generation weapons are passed however they are,” Moira answered. “Though to be fair, Liam got the family sword. A **sword**. Who has those anymore?” But too quickly her eyes darkened. “Not sure where that is, now.”

“I noticed script on the hilts,” Tina said. She shouldered past a man who leered back at her. “What does it say?”

Moira’s face tightened. “One knife says one thing, the other says something else. Together, they read the Byrne family motto.”

It was like pulling teeth, Tina thought, and she decided not to ask what the motto was.

And speaking of family, Tina had an idea of where to take Moira next.

“I’m shocked Ms. Esposito hasn’t noticed us,” Newt muttered as the group crept up the stairs. Tina entered the apartment without knocking and Moira followed with Newt bringing up the rear.

“Queenie?” Tina called.

There was a blur of blonde hair and pink and Queenie practically bowled Tina over with her hug. Moira almost squeaked in alarm. Newt closed the door.

“Teen!” Queenie sounded close to sobbing. “I’m so sorry! I should have never put you in the position of choosing between me and—oh my God, dragons? And Moira was tortured? And...” Now Queenie staggered. Tina caught her weight and helped her sister over towards the couch.

“I’ll make some tea?” Moira said. Tina nodded a bit helplessly as she dropped Queenie onto the couch. Moira only made it a few steps, though, before she tottered on her feet as well. Luckily, Newt was close enough to catch her. Then his eyes nearly watered as the smell of old smoke and sweat rose from her hair.

“Perhaps a nice bath?” Newt said to Moira. Moira shook her head.

“I don’t have time for that.”

“We have time,” Tina stated. “Go shower. And leave your clothes outside so I can clean them.”

Moira gave Tina an odd look. Tina couldn’t tell if the girl was insulted or...then Moira swallowed hard and nodded before venturing into the other room. She locked the door behind her.

With that taken care of, Tina focused on Queenie. Her sister was currently collapsed on the couch and near to the point of fanning herself. Tina fought the urge to roll her eyes.

“This is all so exciting and exhausting.” Queenie rubbed her forehead. She sat up. “But what now?”

Tina realized that both Queenie and Newt were watching her.

“I’m not...” Tina said. “Not sure.”

“Oh no,” Queenie said, then she sank back into the couch. “We’re doomed.”

“No we’re not!” Tina sputtered. Newt rose from his chair and without a word went into his suitcase.

“It’s been a while,” Tina said in answer to Queenie’s incredulous look after Newt.
“No, it’s not that, just that...” Queenie stared wide eyed at Tina, before a slow grin crept across her face. Tina realized exactly what Queenie was seeing in Newt’s mind, and now her own, and the blush melted Tina’s face.

“Tina,” Queenie almost gloated and Tina shoved her a little. Queenie laughed. It felt good to hear laughter, Tina thought. Tina let herself sit back on the couch and sigh. She put her feet up on the coffee table and was surprised by how her feet throbbed.

“I wish I knew what she wanted,” Tina said after a moment.

“Moira, you mean,” Queenie said. The pearls she wore rattled a little as she shifted closer to Tina. Tina was about to ask Queenie what Moira was thinking, then remembered.

“You don’t need to read minds to know some things,” Queenie said. “If I was her, and he had taken all of that from me...I’d want to take the real bastard down.”

“Markus,” Tina nodded. “Get revenge, that sort of thing.”

Queenie nodded but didn’t look convinced.

Moira folded her clothes in a neat pile outside the bathroom before darting within and closing the door. She’d locked the door to the bedroom automatically, and she did the same with the bathroom door. The fact that Tina said she’d clean clothes didn’t register over Moira’s need to feel safe. Walled in. So no one could enter unless she wanted them to.

Stepping under the hot shower spray, Moira kept her eyes lifted and her breathing even. The steam helped loosen her lungs. Plus, it kept her from seeing what she was sure was a nasty stream of water going down the drain.

Neither precaution, though, kept her from thinking.

Moira was going to talk to Credence. She had to find out where the Seals were. Though without MACUSA, she wasn’t entirely sure...what to do from there. Or she knew what her duty was in the situation. Find the Seals. Destroy them. Who cared if she died in the process?

It was that last part giving her pause.

Moira eyed the soaps on the shower stand. Picking up the one that smelled the least flowery, she went to work cleaning all the scum, dirt, and ash from her body. It took far longer than was comforting and half the bar was gone by the end of it.

If she was being honest with herself, and Moira was too good at that, she’d know that what she wanted to do (regardless of Seals and spirits and the like) was go back to her shop. Or, what was left of her shop.

Moira slammed the soap back into place, then snagged the shampoo. She poured too much on her hands but didn’t care as she attacked her hair. The smell of mint and honey rose into the air and she inhaled deep.

She had no idea why she wanted to go back to her shop. She knew it would hurt. but some nagging feeling, like a voice but not as rational...something was telling her to go. That she would find something.
Moira opened her eyes before she was ready. The shampoo poured into her unprotected eyes, and the burning made her cry out and stumble back. She hit the shower knob. The water turned blinding hot so fast that Moira didn’t even think past getting out of the way of the spray.

So when she found herself sprawled on the floor, with one hand on a towel and a broken towel wrack next to her, she didn’t even try to move.

Moira began to cry.

She cried for all the pain she’d gone through. For all the cuts and bruises on her body. And for other things, but her brain stopped naming them as she curled up on the tile floor and the steam billowed around her.

“Moira?”

Moira froze. Her tears went silent.

There was a knock on the door and again, Tina’s voice. “Moira, are you okay? We heard a crash.”

Moira scrambled to turn the tap off. She shoved her hair back from her face and took a few deep breaths. Her heart was racing.

“Moira!” Tina jiggled the doorhandle and Moira snapped out.

“I’m fine!”

Moira heard Tina’s lingering suspicion through the door.

“Are you sure, honey?” Queenie spoke now. “We can help—“

“I’m fine!” Moira lowered her octave and continued. “I just slipped and took out the towel rack. I’ll fix it.”

When there was no response, Moira slid over towards the door. She placed her ear against the damp wood. She made out a hushed conversation—no, argument, judging by the speed of the words and harsh tone.

After a few more minutes, Queenie said, “Take your time, dear, and I’ll have some tea ready when you come out.”

“And I cleaned your clothes!” Tina almost snapped.

“Thank you,” Moira said, but by then she’d already heard the bedroom door close.

Moira exhaled and leaned against the door. She tilted her chin back as she wrapped herself in the warm and fluffy towel.

“Enough tears,” she said aloud. At least for now. Moira shoved off the floor and faced the mirror. Wiping away the steam didn’t prepare her for the sight of her face and she flinched at the bruises and cuts. If there was one thing she could do, at least, was fix her wounds. With another deep breath Moira reached down inside herself for her magic.

Normally, it felt like opening a small hatch for some water to pour through. But this was like opening a floodgate. She’d been resisting using magic after all with all the Aurors around, and with the excess
of panic from the dragons, and the suffering of people around her, the magic within her was more of a heaving ocean then a calm pool.

But now Moira was prepared. She braced herself and didn’t allow her own magic to storm through her veins. She gripped the sink tight and when her head lifted, she saw the light of her magic glowing in her eyes.

“Fix me,” Moira whispered. Her magic complied, eagerly rushing to her wounds. Moira’s grip tightened on the cold porcelain at the faint burning, the feeling of her skin stitching together or her blood spreading to alleviate her bruises. One rib popped a little and she nearly bent double.

Then, just as carefully, she pushed her magic back into its place of rest. She felt peaceful and healed. She fixed the towel rack before facing the mirror again.

That was how a Byrne went about things, Moira thought. Get wounds, heal them, and get back out there. It wasn't the family motto but it was close enough for her.

Outside the bathroom, her clothing rested, folded and clean. As Moira pulled them on she smelled lavender. Did wand magic make clothes smell good, too, not just clean? And now that she was looking at the fabric, all the holes and mending she’d made had been fixed. Hell, the fabric felt thicker too, of something more expensive.

Moira felt a wave of embarrassment. Were her clothes really that trashy that Tina felt the need to fix them without asking? Not that her clothing was really a priority. Except the jacket. She was anxious it would be changed but besides not smelling like smoke it felt the same on her body. A bit light since she'd cleared out all her tools and things before they took the coat away.

Moira hesitated at the bedroom door. She had a plan, for sure. She wondered what Tina and Newt would say about it.

“Right then,” Moira said.

She opened the door.

Chapter End Notes

Not a ground-breaking chapter by any means, but the next section should be up shortly and will be more fun :) 
thanks for the reads!
~lize
The adults looked up from around the table. They each had a mug of steaming liquid in front of them. Queenie smiled, and Newt’s eyes glowed, while Tina looked pale and drawn. For some reason, Moira gave pause. She felt like she was intruding. She wondered if she looked like she’d been crying.

Then Queenie smiled tapped the chair by her side. Moira approached it.

“How are the clothes?” Tina asked. Her fingers worried the mug in her hands.

“Better.” Moira had already sat before she remembered. “Thanks, for that.”

Tina almost smiled. Queenie tapped Moira’s cup with her wand—Moira felt herself flinch back before she realized it would happen—and then the mug was full of tea. It smelled heavenly and Moira inhaled deep.

Queenie made a noise. Moira looked up into the woman’s concerned eyes.

“You’re scared of wands?” Queenie asked.

“Queenie,” Tina warned.

Queenie kept staring at Moira and Moira finally turned away. She felt exposed even though she knew the Legilimens couldn’t read her.

“So,” Moira said. “I have some things I need to do. And I’m guessing you all do as well. So let’s just get that out and in the air, right?” When the adults said nothing, Moira plowed on. “First, I want to speak with the spirit. Then—“

“About that,” Tina interrupted. “Can you explain this process of talking to spirits to me?”

Moira swallowed and said instead, “Then, I need to go to my shop. See what’s left. And then I’ll have what I need to know to go on.”

“And where are we in this plan?” Newt said.

Moira forced herself to shrug. “That’s up to you.” When Newt’s face began to harden, Moira added, “I’d prefer you help me but I don’t know what you’re ready to do.”

“We’d prefer to help you as well,” Tina replied. Moira smiled awkwardly and sipped her tea. She wrinkled her nose. Queenie nudged over the sugar bowl and Moira took it gratefully.

“I’m surprised at one thing,” Newt said. “Don’t you want to know where Kai is?”
“He’s alive,” Moira stated. To be honest, she hadn’t thought of it. She’d just assumed that Kai would
find her. Most likely when she went outside. Speaking of which...

Moira pushed back from the table. “I need to...go on the roof. I’ll be back.”

“Are you going to talk to a spirit?” Tina asked eagerly, also rising.

“I just need air,” Moira dodged, and then she went to the door. In the frame she said, “Just a minute.
I’ll be back.”

“But Moira—“

Moira closed the door. She exhaled and peered up. The stairs suddenly seemed as steep as Everest.
And she’d left a perfectly good cup of tea in the apartment.

When she was on the roof, the sun was in its afternoon groove. Daytime traffic blared. The air was
smoggy today too. Probably from the lack of rain—

No, Moira realized. Not smog.

Spirits.

Hundreds. Floating over buildings, across streets, hovering by streetlamps and swirling around the
living that moved unnoticed by the living save for a few shivers and a tightening of arms.

At least for now.

Moira drew closer to the roof edge, her eyes so wide it hurt. Some of the spirits were no more than
colorful balls of light drifting through the air like oversized dust motes. Other spirits were almost fully
realized, their human forms drifting listlessly alongside their living counterparts.

It was so much movement and substance, yet it was entirely silent.

“I’m not supposed to see them,” Moira whispered. “Not in the daytime.”

If the situation was this bad, it meant the spirits could turn on people. If they gained enough power
from the Seals, they could become visible even to No Maj’s, and the chaos...

Then she felt like someone had prodded her spine with a stick. Moira spun.

“Credence,” Moira acknowledged.

The spirit drifted forwards. No, walked. At a quick glance he almost appeared alive. His feet even
left indentions in the roof dust. His dark eyes were fixed on hers with an intensity that made Moira
uncomfortable.

Moira swallowed.

“We can’t cross,” Credence said with something like anger. “None of us can.”

“Then tell me how to help them,” Moira said.

Credence shook his head. “You first. How is Modesty?”

Moira took a deep breath to prevent bitter words like ‘who cares about a single girl’ from coming out. “She’s alive. She’s staying in a kid’s house called Miss Kay’s. It’s not an easy life, but she’s
learning to read and write better. And she has a friend named Mary Kate.”

“Does she seem happy?” Credence asked. The anger had faded, so his voice sounded more like leaves shuffling on a sidewalk.

Moira felt herself relent, just a little. “She misses you, but yes, she seems happy.”

Credence gave a shy, sincere smile. “Then I’m happy for that.” He lifted his face, gazed above. “Very happy.”

Moira didn’t press though she wanted to. A few minutes passed before Credence offered Moira something. Moira took it, experiencing a jolt as the spirit matter turned real in her hand. It was a rolled piece of parchment. Unrolling it, Moira saw a rough map of the burrow pocked with multiple red X’s. The red X’s circled around one single point but that was the only pattern Moira could tell.

“This is it?” Moira said. “The Seals?”

“Yes.” Credence’s eyes flickered with worry. “I had to work fast. The spirits are not crossing over.”

“I can see that.”

Credence shifted closer and Moira almost stepped back at the glow in his eyes.

“Do they know?” Credence whispered.

“What?” Moira said.

Then, a new voice entered the fray.

“Moira? Who are you talking to?”

Moira spun to see Newt and Tina walking out of the door. She felt the air ripple as Credence saw them as well. The two wizards darted looks around the rooftop and Tina approached with concern in her eyes. “Moira, are you talking to yourself? What’s going on?”

Moira felt like a fire now burned behind her. She glanced back to Credence. His edges were shimmering with white light, his eyes fixed on Tina and Newt.

The realization hit Moira hard and swift.

“It’s you two,” Moira said. “You were the ones.”

“What?” Newt said.

Moira grabbed Tina’s hands and Newt’s and focused her magic to course into them. Tina yelped and Newt tried to pull away but then they both stilled and she knew they saw him.

“Credence?” Tina whispered. “Oh my God.”

Credence’s form settled again. Color returned to his skin, his hair and eyes. He looked alive, more alive then when he had been living. He gave another shy smile.

Newt stepped forward but Moira tightened her grip.

“You can’t touch him,” Moira said.
“You see him too?” Newt said.

“I always see them, Moira’s voice softened. “Tell them what you want, Credence.”

Credence’s mouth opened and shut as his eyes darted between Newt and Tina. Then, a faint wind blew across the rooftop. Credence closed his eyes. As the wind grew stronger, his form grew weaker, and then he began to fade.

“Credence!” Tina cried.

Credence’s eyes opened at the last second. His face was lit with a peaceful, glowing look that took Moira’s breath away.

Then he was gone.

Moira released Newt and Tina. Tina spun and Newt strode to where Credence had stood, staring up and around as if the boy would return.

“He passed on,” Moira said with shock. A flicker of hope tried to grow inside her.


“Why was he here?”

“He told me he wanted to thank whoever tried to help him,” Moira said. “And I told him that the people who helped him probably didn’t need thanks...” She paused. “I guess he took me literally.”

When Newt and Tina just stared at her with various expressions of shock and loss, Moira threw her hands up. “I just communicate with the spirits! I don’t explain for them. But look, more importantly,” Moira unfolded the parchment again and showed them. “He got me the information. This is where the Seals are in the city.”

“There’s so many,” Tina whispered.

“Yeah.” Moira didn’t dwell on that. “We’re going to need some serious back up. I can’t destroy ‘em all on my own.”

“How many will you need?” Tina asked.

Moira ran through numbers. Each Seal, with just ordinary wizard power, would require at least twenty wizards to destroy it. That would mean, with ten seals, at least 200 wizards. If she could destroy four of them...Moira’s stomach turned. No, when she destroyed four of them, that would mean only 120 wizards...but it was too many. She wasn’t sure if even MACUSA had that kind of firepower on hand.

Not to mention, would MACUSA help even if she asked?

“Moira?”

Moira snapped out of her thoughts to see Newt and Tina gazing at her in concern. She could tell they knew what she knew. At least partially.

In the end, she didn’t get a chance to, because at that moment, something plowed into her back. Moira pitched forward with a cry and barely caught herself.

“Victoria!” Newt cried, and Moira had little time to think before she felt claws scrapple with her coat
and yank. Maybe to pull her to a sitting. Moira flipped over and the black Kyran settled on her stomach. When Moira made eye contact the creature hissed and ruffled her feathers, stepping left and right.

“How did she get out?” Tina demanded while Newt just shrugged helplessly. More shadows fell across the rooftop. Moira shielded her eyes to see. Two other figures circled overhead. With a pang, Moira didn’t recognize Kai among them. The other Kyrans still swept down, though, and landed on either side of Moira. They huddled in close and began to hum. Despite everything, Moira felt comforted.

“Newt,” Tina almost chided. “Stop drawing.”

While Newt ignored Tina, the Kyrans did not. The three rose into the air and again circled. They beat their wings in time, and they flew in such a tight formation that the beak of one nearly touched the tail of the other.

“What does it mean?” Newt asked in wonder. The Kyrans’ movement reminded him of something, the shape drawing up the memory of a drawing in a text or another picture, some part of his research...

Moira rose. “I think they want us to follow them?”

Victoria screeched. Oliver and Carmen echoed the cry, before the Kyrans flew down between the buildings and out of sight.

Newt dashed to the side of the building. “Where did they go?!”

“We need to follow them,” Moira stated. She also rushed to Newt’s side, just as the three creatures appeared at the other side of the building before them. Victoria called out and without a thought Moira whistled back. If she wasn’t wrong Victoria gave an approving swoop of her tail in reply.

“We need to follow,” Moira repeated.

“Where?” Tina said. “It’s not like we can fly after them!”

“The rooftops,” Moira said.

Then she started running.

It became quickly apparent that the Wandhands were not going to jump rooftop to rooftop as Moira did all the way to the 14th ward. Instead, they did their Apparating trick. Moira experienced her second bout of wand jealousy as they effortlessly crossed the distance, while she was sweating and exerting herself.

They arrived at the 14th only a few minutes later. Moira stopped on a rooftop just at the edge, to take in the view.

It was not as bad as she expected.

Most of the buildings that had been blown apart were back to their usual shape. Even the church spire stretched high into the air. She could hear the rattle of the trains, the flutter of laundry that was again strung between the alleys.
Yet the air was hushed. Few children played in the streets. And even from here, she could see more than one dark shape lingering on the rooftops.

Moira drew her coat collar high around her neck and pulled the cap lower over her eyes. She hardly dared to look at the place that she had called home.

But she did.

It was the only building that still looked burned. Or as far as she could tell it did, since it was encased in scaffolding. The rooftop was crumbled in; blackened stone and more crater then surface. Still, if she squinted, she could have sworn she saw some green, something living poking through the blackened top...

Newt and Tina appeared beside her. They were breathing fast like they had run for six blocks.

“We’re going in, right?” Tina said.

“We have to be careful,” Moira almost wasn’t aware she was speaking, staring at the building that had been her home. “Falcons are runnin’ everywhere.”

“If we don disguises, and keep to the ground...” Newt trailed off.

They didn’t really come up with a better idea. Moira let Tina do some sort of magic to Moira’s face to make her skin a bit dirtier and also put lifts in her shoes. Tina offered to change Moira’s hair but Moira didn’t want that to backfire somehow. Her hair was a nightmare enough without magic making it worse. Newt made his clothes duller, dirtier. He conjured another hat.

Both paused when they looked at Tina.

“What?” Tina said.

“She’s too...” Moira gestured to Tina’s person.

“I agree,” Newt said, almost beaming.

“It’s a problem,” Moira shot back.

“What?” Tina said.

“You’re too shiny,” Moira said. “Can you...”

Tina tried changing her trousers to a baggier skirt, made her blouse dingy and threadbare. She even ruffled her hair up. After she straightened her coat, then un-straightened it, Tina said, “How about now?”

Moira’s critical eyes swept over her. Newt covered his mouth but his eyes danced. Tina narrowed her gaze. “What now?”

“Could you hunch?” Moira offered. “Maybe...I dunno. You just reek of Auror.”

“Seriously?” Tina snapped before she realized that might be a compliment.

Moira heaved a sigh. “Let’s just move out.”

They took back alleys for the most part. Moira stayed by Newt’s side, keeping her head down even while she guided them through the way. Tina’s eyes roved the streets. While the walls were healed,
the people were definitely not. Furtive eyes darted from the windows. Women whispered in the corners. Some shops were closed, not even trying to pretend everything was fine. The Apothecary was one such shop.

When they rounded the block, they came across their first herd of children. Though there were only four of them, they whispered even as they played jacks.

Newt paused as a familiar head rose. His eyes widened on Newt and he opened his mouth for a hello to bellow out—but then Moira’s gaze lifted, and Peter’s mouth snapped shut just as the other kids turned to look curiously.

“Twosies!” Peter cried, and the kids returned to their game, ignoring the other three. Tina noted Moira shaking by her side but the three said nothing as they went back around the next corner. When Tina tried to say something, Moira’s glare was so hot that Tina didn’t even speak.

They reached the building. The scaffolding was empty of workers, making Tina think more and more that its inclusion was more artifice then anything.

Moira began to climb. She didn’t look back to see if they followed. Her eyes were focused only above.

“What if the Falcons are there?” Tina said to Newt. Newt shrugged and kept climbing.

“Did you just shrug?” Tina said, though she too climbed. “This is not a shrug off kind of moment, Newt!”

“The Kyrans are here,” Newt stated simply.

And the Kyrans were. Tina could see the flashes of their feathers as they darted silently between the scaffoldings.

“So?” Tina still said.

“Well, I’m not sure if I’ve ever explained—“ Newt stopped as he nearly coshed his head on a wooden beam. Once he collected himself he continued. “But the beak of a Kyran is actually lined with a strong poison. One well-meaned bite and the bitten are gone for.”

Tina gaped at his feet. “Are you serious?”

“Completely.” Newt made it to the final platform and offered his hand to help Tina up. “In the ancient times, the Kyran not only decided justice, but carried out the execution.”

Tina didn’t have much time to dwell on the new information as she nearly ran into Moira’s back. The girl had frozen on the top of the scaffolding. The scaffolding itself went one story above the top of the building, meaning that the roof was a bit below them, and the scaffolding shielded the roof from sight.

Only, there was no roof. Only green foliage. For a crazed moment Tina almost thought she was looking down into something like Central Park, the flora was so dense from roof edge to roof edge.

Except when Tina looked closely, the trees were...none she recognized. The leaves were shaped in knots, or strange and bright flowers peaked out, or tree limbs were as red as blood, and if she wasn’t wrong there was a vine slowly creeping towards them, almost seeming to walk on its own...

“Jerry,” Moira chided, and the vine cringed back at her voice.
Tina waited for an explanation. Instead, Moira simply stepped off the stone and plummeted into the green bowl.

While Tina sputtered, the Kyrans suddenly appeared. Without much ado, Carmen and Oliver snagged their talons in Newt’s coat and hoisted him into the air. While Tina would have screamed and kicked, Newt kept very still, allowing the creatures to carefully lower him into the treetops. He even waved at Tina as he disappeared.

Tina eyed Victoria. Victoria eyed her back with more satisfaction.

“Just do it,” Tina hissed, and the Kyran latched her claws into Tina’s coat. The lift was gentler then she expected—though the wing power was blowing her hair everywhere, and Tina still had to close her eyes as the tree leaves brushed her feet, her legs, then batted at her face.

When her feet touched the ground, it wasn’t soon enough.

Tina opened her eyes. She could vaguely make out the remainder of walls but vines or moss mostly choked them. The floor was stone, cracked and rifed with roots. Trunks blocked a clear view forward but Tina could make out the vague shapes of man-made plant beds overflowing with flowers, herbs, and probably more magical plants then Tina could name.

“Newt?” Tina called. Victoria landed and began to stroll forward. Tina followed.

The space grew less tamed as they entered. One massive tree—she wondered, vaguely, if its roots stretched into the rooms below—had a sitting chair lodged in its branches. A broken ladder lay on the floor. The whole place smelled like tilled earth. A few worktables stood relatively unharmed in the center of the room, except that all the bottles, tools, and cauldrons littered the floor like a hurricane had come through. Tina recognized the sapphire blue feathers strewn around the mess.

Then she caught a flash of Newt’s coat ahead and strode forward. Victoria vanished.

“Newt?” Tina called. “Is Moira with you?”

Tina heard someone cry out, then a heavy commotion of thuds. Glass shattered. Another shout. Heart pounding, Tina sprinted forward through the trees. When she saw Newt standing in a small clearing she nearly jumped on him. But he restrained her and put a finger to his lips, before pointing ahead.

Tina peered through the leaves.

A few feet away and between two overturned workbenches stood Moira. She was withdrawing back, her fist still raised. There was some blood on her knuckles.

On the ground, someone was struggling to rise.

“Moira!” Tina cried. She rushed forward before Newt could hold her back. Moira didn’t turn her head as Tina approached. “Moira, what on Earth are you…”

Tina trailed off. The man on the floor was on his knees now. His hand covered his face, and blood seeped through his scarred fingers, but the familiar voice seemed to smile.

“Well, Moira,” Declan said. “I think you broke my nose.”
WOOP THERE HE IS.
I am way too happy to get to this point ^_^ and yet there's even MORE so stay tuned :D
thanks for the reads!
~lize
Moira didn’t remember punching one of her oldest friends. She remembered seeing his face. Then her fist had just moved.

And now Declan was on the ground, bleeding and smiling as if she had just handed him a bouquet of flowers.

She couldn’t process it. He had been dead a few minutes ago. Dead. Some piece of her had died with him, and now that piece of her was trying to revive. And the rest of her body didn’t know how to cope. She felt hot and cold, antsy and drained, and about to vomit.

Maybe she should punch him again.

Declan rose, his eyes on her the whole time, as he wiped blood away from his mouth. She didn’t see any burns on his skin. He wore clean clothes. Even his hair looked decent. It was like the whole night never happened to him.

While everything imaginable had happened to her.

His smile faded. "Moira. Say something."

Moira clenched her fists, but her mouth wouldn’t open. Declan’s eyes flashed. “Spit it out, Mo. You’re scaring me.”

“You’re scared?” Moira’s voice sounded odd to her ears. “You’re scared?”

Moira sensed Tina and Newt shifting behind her. Newt murmured something and Moira heard the plants shift, rustle as the two retreated back. Giving them privacy, or avoiding the blows. Moira still wasn’t sure what she wanted.

“You probably have questions,” Declan’s voice was softer now. He took one step forward.

She took one step back. She couldn’t help it. It was like talking to a ghost.

Again, his eyes flashed, and now his lips set in a tense line. The silence between them was like a physical pain to Moira, like a knife trying to bury in her stomach. She couldn’t run but she couldn’t look at him.

“I can’t talk to you like this,” he said.

“Like what?”

“I don’t know,” Declan hissed.
Rage filled Moira so fast she couldn’t control it. She was still, and the next moment she lunged at him. His eyes widened. He might have said something before he lunged at her—and then they Apparated. One second she was standing among her plants, among things she knew—and then she was up on the scaffolding around the rooftop, the wind tossing her hair back with icy fingers, and the sky was starting to blur with the sun setting.

Moira stumbled. Declan reached out to catch her. She shoved him back. His back hit the pole of the scaffolding and then she was in front of him. She was about to shove again when he lifted his hands.

“I get that you’re angry,” he said. “But if you keep hitting, I’ll hit back.”

“Angry.” Moira tasted the word in her mouth and spat it back out. “Angry? Angry doesn’t—it doesn’t even—do you know what happened to me? Do you know what the last few hours have been like?”

“Moira.”

“‘Cause I’ll tell you. I’ll tell you all of it. Let’s see,” Moira spun, stalked to the other end of the scaffolding. She wanted to punch something, do something to get rid of the anger twisting inside her. “I was arrested by MACUSA. I was tortured—they called it interrogated but whatever—and then I thought I was going to die, and then I wanted to die, and then—”

Declan’s hands closed around her shoulders, spun her. His eyes glittered with panic. “Stop. Just stop.”

“I can’t!” Moira barely recognized her own voice. She shoved his hands away. “You can’t tell me to stop because you were not there and I needed you there! I needed my friend more than any time in my life and you weren’t there.”

Declan said nothing. Spinning away from him, Moira strode away then stopped, trying to collect her thoughts together. The cold wind helped. It calmed the raging in her head enough that she could at least see clear.

With an odd shock, she realized that she recognized this view. Her shop used to face this direction. The building across from her now—a red brick tenant with small windows, nothing special- was one that she had looked at many times while working at her bench, mixing or brewing or cutting or blending. The same red brick, the same small windows, none of it scorched by dragon flame as it had been only a few...a day ago. It had only been a day, right? A night and a day was all he had been gone.

Why had it felt like an eternity?

He was still silent behind her. Waiting, maybe. He might not even be there. This could all be a nightmare and she'd wake up alone again. She spun as panic filled her again.

But there he was, standing a few feet from her. His familiar face was pale, drawn, and his hands were hanging by his sides. The wind tossed his hair into his eyes but she could still see the caution in them, see the wariness in the slope of his shoulders.

“I don’t know what to do,” Moira finally said. “I thought you were dead.”

“I’m not,” he said.

Something molten-hot rose in her chest and, to her horror, Moira’s vision blurred. But when Declan stepped towards her she could only step back.
His eyes flashed. “Why are you backing away?”

“I...I don’t...” Moira couldn’t find words. She shook her head and took another step back but her foot ran into the ledge. She tensed.

“Did you...did you want me to die?” Declan asked.

“No!” Moira barked.

Declan blinked. His voice tightened. “Then why are you acting like this?”

Moira went still. Her heartbeat sounded too loud in her body. She felt the beating, hollow echo in her ears.

“Declan,” Moira said after a moment. “I almost died.”

Declan’s eyes snapped back to her’s. Moira felt cold, alone, as she said, “I almost died and you weren’t there. Where were you?”

Declan stared at her. His mouth opened and closed. Moira swallowed and repeated the question. When he kept quiet, she stepped forward and repeated the question again. Still he said nothing and she repeated again, and some vague voice told her that she was screaming, and she didn’t realize it until Declan finally covered his ears and shouted "Let me explain!"

His voice was like a slap to her face. Declan never raised his voice. He never shouted, or not at her. Her friend seemed to realize it at the same time. He stepped back and turned away from her with his arms crossed, catching his breath.

She followed his example, breathing deeply and crossing her arms, almost hugging herself like pieces of her were falling away.

“Okay,” Moira said. “Say what you want.”

Declan ran his hand over his mouth. The movement was so familiar she could tell it even with his back turned. When he faced her, she couldn’t bare to meet his eyes, to see the raw emotion boiling in them. But she made herself look at him, and not look away, when he started speaking.

“I didn’t know when you threw me into the burning house, that I was going to leave. I thought I was going to die. And I thought, at that moment,” Declan swallowed, shook his head, kept going. “I thought ‘if I’m gone, Markus can’t find her.’ That’s what I thought.”

“Shit,” Moira whispered.

Declan was encouraged. He continued. “But I couldn’t...I didn’t want to die. I didn’t. So I Apparated. With Kai. We ended up in your apartment, and I could hear...I could hear what happened with MACUSA on the roof. I had to think. I realized if I’m dead, if she thinks I’m dead, then Markus won’t be able to find her by finding me. And I thought if Markus wasn’t looking for me, then I could investigate him.”

There was a moment paused where Declan breathed fast, his eyes closed and his hands like claws in his hair.

“That makes no sense!” Moira burst out.

Declan shook his head. "I thought if you were anywhere—even MACUSA—it would be safer then
in the burrow. I just wanted you as far from Markus as possible. I thought you—but it went wrong! I know that!” Declan was yelling again. “I know I was wrong, Moira, and I’m damn sorry, but you’re still here!”

“No thanks to you.”

“No shit, Moira. No shit. You saved yourself. I’m just...”

Declan was crying, Moira realized. It wasn’t that she had never seen him do that, but it still shocked her. Declan covered his eyes with his hands as he snagged in a breath.

“I’m sorry,” he finally said. “I’m so sorry that I lied to you, and I’m sorry that what I did hurt you so much. I’m trying to make up for that now.”

With that, Declan was finished.

Moira stared at him. She could still see his tears leaking past his hands, dripping down his chin. He was shaking. Looking closer, she saw that there were still a few burns healing around his wrists. New scars crisscrossed his hands, patched up his arms. Burn scars. Of course Declan didn’t know how to heal his burns so they wouldn’t scar. She had always been there to heal his wounds, after all.

She imagined him, trying to heal himself, alone, because he wanted her to be safe.

She remembered being in that cell in MACUSA, wishing for the pain to stop. Wishing for any way to make the pain, the loss and the grief, stop.

And her hand stung, from where she had punched him.

Her anger, her rage, drained suddenly from her body. She wavered on her feet without its stabilizing force.

Moira drew close to Declan. She saw his shoulders tense. Reaching out, she drew his hands down from his face. His eyes were closed, his face bright red. Ashamed, probably, to be caught crying. Moira knew the feeling. Keeping their hands linked, she said, “I shouldn’t have punched you.”

“I deserved that, I think.”

“No,” Moira shook her head. “No one deserves that.”

His eyes darkened, and he nodded. Moira had a hard time looking into his expression so she moved a little closer and rested her head on his shoulder.

“Don’t leave like that again,” Moira said. “Please.”

Declan’s hands tightened around her’s. She could feel his deep inhale, feel his warm breath over her hair.

“Okay,” he said.

“I mean it.”

“I know.”

They stayed close for a few moments. The wind swirled around them and Moira shivered. Declan was warm and solid against the cold. On instinct, she pressed closer to him.
He straightened. She froze.

The wind picked up.

“I’m cold,” Moira explained.

Declan cleared his throat. “I feel the same.”

“The same?” Moira squeaked.

“I mean,” and Declan drew back now. Moira suddenly felt their hands connected were a raft in a tossing sea. This close, she could see the scar she’d left on his chin when they were nine. She could see the golden ring around his irises. But this close she could somehow feel the breadth of his shoulders, the way he was tall enough to lean over her, making her feel wrapped close and safe.

Safe.

She could see his pupils dilate, see the flush rising in his cheeks that had nothing to do with the cold. Her heart sped and skipped.

“Can I try something?” he said.

Safe, Moira thought. She nodded. When he moved closer, she fought the instinctive urge to lean back.

Declan wrapped his arms around her and drew her close. He tucked her head under his chin, and Moira was entirely wrapped in his warmth, his scent, just him. When she turned her head, she could feel the scratchy wool of his sweater against her cheek and the soft skin of his neck on her forehead. His heartbeat was right next to her's.

He'd never held her this close. Hell, no one held her like this. It was comforting but intimate. She had no idea where to put her hands (shoulders? back? keep them by her sides?), and she was itching to push him away, to...to...

Kiss him.

Declan's arms tightened and for a terrifying moment Moira thought he had read her mind. But instead he sighed and said,

"So. We're okay?"

His voice rumbled against her, even though his voice never rumbled. Moira nodded, unable to speak. Declan made a noise.

"What?" she said.

"Nothing. Just got a nose-full of your hair."

She made a sharp sound and went to draw back but then his hand ghosted up her back and into her hair. She went still as his fingers combed through the locks, gentle, almost exploring. Moira's chest was tight and growing tighter. She felt too warm. She desperately wanted to tilt back her head, to look into his face, to see what he was thinking, but she was too nervous to move.

"It's okay to lean on me, Moira," he murmured. "I'm not going anywhere."

"You left," Moira whispered.
"Not again." Declan promised. She could feel his body tense, then relax. "I can't."

A part of Moira's heart loosened and fell and she knew from that moment that she wouldn't be able to leave him, either. It scared her. She'd tried not to rely on people because people, sometimes because they chose to and sometimes because they didn't, left.

Maybe that would change, though. If she held on tightly enough. So Moira lifted her hands and wrapped her arms around him, gripping him close, and let tears she didn't even know she had left flow silently from her eyes.

As soon as Newt heard the two teenagers Disapparate, he knew Tina and him would be waiting for a while. Looking around the veritable jungle in the apartment, he almost couldn't believe that a few days ago, he'd been lying on a table in an organized work space. He wondered where the comfortable chairs had gone.

"Where did they go?" Tina demanded, looking around. For a moment, Newt thought she was talking about the chairs. But when he saw her squinting above he shrugged. It seemed to him that the young people needed some alone time.

Tina sighed and threw her hands in the air but did not complain. Her eyes darted around the space and she put her hands in her pockets, rocking on her heels. She was thinking about something. Newt decided not to ask what it was. Instead, he withdrew his wand, and went to work righting Moira's work table, and at least some of the wrecked potion wear and the like, just for some form of distraction. Unfortunately, that only took a few minutes.

He glanced up and around. He saw the flash of Carmen's scarlet feathers among the green, and hoped the Kyrans weren't eating anything poisonous.

At the sound of paper crinkling, he looked back to see Tina opening the map Credence had given Moira. It gave him an odd pang to see it. He couldn't decide what had unsettled him more, seeing Moira taking a map from a spirit, or looking into the eyes of a boy that Newt had felt guilty over for the past year. The peace in Credence's gaze, though, and the sight of the boy's spirit fading into the air, had definitely changed some of Newt's perspective on the mythical world outside what he could test and sketch and study.

Tina cursed. Newt was finished with what he could fix of the tables, benches and things, so he drew close behind her. He peered over her shoulder.

"What is it?" he asked.

"There's so many Seals," Tina said.

"MACUSA will help," Newt said, trying to sound hopeful.

"But what if the President doesn't give us the Aurors?" Tina faced Newt with a pale face. "I don't think Moira...I don't think we could survive that."

"There has to be a way." Newt believed it, felt it as he held Tina's gaze. "Tina, there is a way."

"I know, I just feel like there is something missing, or there's something Moira is not telling us, or there is something that I know but I just don't know, you know?"

Newt blinked. "Not particularly, no."
Tina laughed. Then she sighed and lowered the map. She looked so exhausted that Newt wanted to wrap his arms around her in comfort.

It took him a moment to remember that he could, in fact, do those sorts of things. So Newt reached out and wrapped his arms around her waist. Tina leaned back into him and sighed, turning her face into his neck and breathing deep.

"Thanks," she said.

"For what?"

"For knowing what to do." Her eyes closed. He kept still, not wanting to jostle her or anything. But this close, he could smell her hair, smell the sweet, fresh smell that was just Tina, and his stomach tightened. He was just lowering his mouth close to her's when her eyes sprung open and she said, "You know, there's one part that bugs me."

Newt snapped his eyes away and nodded curtly. "And what's that?"

Tina looked confused a moment. "You okay, Newt?"

"Of course." Except he was burning to kiss her and didn't want to interrupt her thoughts. "What is...bugging you?"

"Jacob."

"Oh. Well, I can apologize again for..."

"It's not that part. It's just...all the other things I get, from the Falcon's point. Targeting Moira, unleashing the dragons, bringing in MACUSA, all that serves a purpose. But someone giving Jacob back his memories...I assumed it was a Falcon, but what's the benefit?"

Newt thought on it. It was a bit of a loose end. Jacob was outside of the magical world, outside of all the Falcon's magical influence. The man didn't even live within the Falcon's sphere of physical territory.

"It was a distraction, I suppose," Newt said. When Tina looked at him, he said, "A distraction for you, maybe?"

"Distract from what? We already saw the rest of the plan."

Newt felt a shiver go down his spine. "I couldn't say."

Tina sighed. "And that's my problem too."

"Hmm." Newt began to sway back and forth. Tina closed her eyes and swayed with him. If Newt could sing he'd at least hum for them. The forest apartment was peaceful in its own way. It was warm, for one, as if in its own cocoon away from the winter chaos outside. He imagined lying in a hammock, preferably with Tina by his side, and watching the leaves sway overhead. Maybe he'd read a book, take some notes on the fauna. Tina would fall asleep beside him, and like now he would try not to jostle her too much while he read.

He could have lived in that dream forever. He could see it so clearly, like someone had written it in ink before his eyes.

That peace broke when the front door banged open and a loud female voice boomed,
The Kyrans screeched. Newt and Tina separated like startled birds as something crashed through the forest. There was some vicious swearing, then a flash of magic, and the plants before them parted like a river around a boulder. That boulder was currently rolling towards the two at a threatening speed.

Newt reached into his coat for his wand as Tina reached for her's but by then a woman stood before them. She was statuesque, her strong arms braced against her wide hips. Her hair was a thundercloud around her head, and her flashing eyes swept over them before going above. Newt thought she looked familiar.

The woman looked at the two before her eyes narrowed. "Who the hell are you?"

Newt didn't have time to respond before there was a screech and streak of azure, and then Kai flew from behind the woman and straight above. A few seconds later there was a loud yell, some clambering, and Kai returned bearing Declan like a stork carrying a bundle. Kai dropped Declan rather unceremoniously in front of the woman.

Declan lifted his head, rubbing his neck, but paled upon seeing the woman. The woman, in return, turned brick red and said, "You better have a good explanation for this."

Declan recoiled. His mouth opened and closed before he gave a terrified, "Uh."

There was another crash. Newt felt a breeze of magic ruffle the treetops before Moira landed behind Declan and said, "What the hell is goin' on?"

The strange woman's eyes narrowed. "You. Moira Byrne."

Above, Kai gave a cheerful chirp before flying down and landing on Moira's back. For the first time Moira seemed completely unaware of her Kyran's presence as she stared wide-eyed at the woman. Newt wondered if the woman was a threat.

"If you don't mind me asking," Tina broke the tense quiet. "Who are you?"

"Jude Murray," the woman said. "Nice to meet you." Then her eyes flashed onto Declan. "And I'm waiting for that explanation, son."

"Son?" Tina glanced between the large angry woman and Declan, who resembled something like an awkward, curly-haired beanpole in comparison.

"Uh, mum," Declan gestured to the two. "Meet Ms. Tina Goldstein and Mr. Newt-

"I know who the Goldbloods are, Gerald," Jude snapped. "Where the hell have you been?"

This time Moira came up behind Declan. She grabbed her friend under the arms and hoisted. Declan rose, brushed himself off, and squared back his shoulders. When he opened his mouth, no words came out. He blinked, tried again, then shook his head.

Jude's anger seemed to break. Her eyes softened and she said, "They told us you were dead, Gerald."

Declan's eyes snapped to awareness. "What? Who did?"

"The Falcons. Sent some sort of death messenger boy." Jude shivered. "It was like the war all over
again. The whole burrow's been talkin' bout it." Jude stepped out and without another word wrapped her son in a tight embrace. "So you can explain it all while I hold you right now, okay?"

"Mum," Declan muttered. "I can't breathe."

"Good," Jude snapped.

Newt looked to Moira for an explanation. Moira's eyes were distant as she looked at the mother holding her son, then the girl looked away and blinked a few times. Tina went to Moira's side.

"Moira," Tina said. "Is there another way to destroy the Seals?"

Moira straightened. Declan tried to turn his head to look at Moira, and Jude had fixed her eyes on the girl. With all gazes on her, Moira took a small step back. She shook her head.

"I don't...I don't know another way," she said.

"What is this, breaking Seals?" Jude's voice was tense. "Moira. Are you talkin' Spirit Seals?"

When Moira said nothing Jude promptly released her son and almost stormed up to Moira. She grabbed the girl by the arms and shook her.

"What the hell are you thinking, breaking Seals on your own?" Jude demanded. "That could kill you!"

"I've done it," Moira looked a bit rattled. "I've done it before."

"Yeah, and I bet it near killed you. What would your mother think? And you two," Jude spun, placing herself between Moira and Tina. "What the hell are you thinking, asking a girl to do that kind of dark magic? You don't have enough wizards at MACUSA to do it?"

"What do you know about Seals?" Tina asked, shocked.

"Yeah, mum," Declan sounded sour. "What do you know?"

Jude's eyes darted between the rest of them. A few calculations came and passed through her eyes before she finally landed on Moira.

"You know about the back room of Jamison's place, right?"

Moira blinked. "Yeah, sure."

"Good. Meet me there in one hour. And you." She grabbed Declan by the ear, "are coming with me."

With that, the mother and son Apparated. Moira gazed blankly at where the two had been standing only a moment before she turned to Newt and Tina. She shoved her hands in her pockets and said,

"I think I know what she's going to talk about."

"What?" Tina said.

Moira shook her head, though. Her look was troubled. "There's a kind of loop-hole in the Seals. But it's not...it won't be pretty."

"You dying," Newt said, "isn't pretty either."
But Moira still did not look convinced. Instead she shrugged and gave them her back. Kai, still perched there, buried his beak in her hair. Moira stroked his head absently before continuing on to the door. Not sure what else to do, Newt and Tina followed.

Chapter End Notes

Kind of have mixed feelings about this one, which was why the update took forever *bows apologetically* but I hope everyone is having a lovely time this weekend! thanks for the reads,

~lize
Declan considered himself a patient person. When it came to emotions, it was better to wait them out then just act right away.

For example Declan had lost one of his best friends, and had not twisted himself apart from the grief like he had wanted to. He’d waited it out. Was still waiting it out one some of his bad days.

Declan had watched his other best friend become consumed by megalomania. And yet Declan had neither interfered, nor drawn any suspicion from his friend that he was planning to interfere. Because Declan was not going to interfere. Not yet, anyway, and that was because of his greatest source of patience.

She was currently sitting across from him at the table, bouncing her foot and looking at the clock in the snug of the Clover and Cat.

“They’re late,” Moira said, scowling at the wall.

“Patience,” Declan murmured. “They’re walking, remember?”

Moira crossed her arms. “Don’t patronize me.”

“Right. Sorry.”

Moira just sighed. She’d been avoiding looking at him since they arrived at Mr. James’. Declan couldn’t tell if it was her being nervous about whatever his mother had to say, or about what happened—really what didn’t happen—on the rooftop between them.

Patience. Declan repeated this to himself till the word didn’t seem real anymore.

The walls around them were dark with panelled wood and the floor was unpolished concrete, making the room colder then what it should have been. A dusty light hung from the ceiling. It looked like it had been retrofitted for electricity. This room was soundproof and, to a certain level, magic proof as well. People couldn’t get in without Mr. James’ permission.

Declan could still hear the thoughts, though. They swirled around outside the room. It reminded him of a beehive. If he focused, each voice would shout out. To him people didn’t really think in words so much, or rarely they did. They thought in colors, impressions, half sentences and music. If someone asked him what a person was thinking it would take Declan a moment to translate. Even then, it would just be his best guess. Perhaps if he had been properly trained, Declan would be a better Legilimens. But since he had chosen to help his friend take over the gangs in their neighborhood, school hadn’t really been a thing.
Not that he got the letter, anyway. He remembered that day. He and Markus shared a birthday, and neither had received a summons from Ilvermorny.

Are we not good? Why won’t they want us?

“What are you thinking?”

Declan’s eyes flickered back to Moira. “Wondering what my mum has to say about the Seals, and how she knows it.”

Moira watched him for a moment. He knew that she knew he wasn’t telling the truth. Her large eyes lowered and she said, “I doubt it’s anything that’s not in here.” Moira picked up the small black book. Sometimes Declan thought he heard a whispering coming from the warped ages. It gave him the creeps.

Moira laid the book down on the table and shoved it to the center. Declan was glad the book was no longer touching her.

“Where did it come from?” he asked. Moira shrugged.

“It’s been in my family. My mum gave it to me along with her other family spellbooks...” Her face paled as her words trailed off. He assumed she was remembering that those spellbooks from her mother were gone now. Burned away. Like he was supposed to have been.

Declan tapped the book gently. “Have you read all of it?”

“No,” Moira shook her head, swift and sharp. “It hurts my eyes to read it.”

Declan was glad. Looking at the cracked black cover, the slightly molded pages, he sensed that such a book wasn’t meant for the eyes of good people.

The only door into the small room opened. Both rose and turned to see Jude and Tina come in. Jude nodded to Declan and closed the door behind her. Tina hovered just inside the room, her sharp dark eyes darting around the space.

“It’s magic proof,” Declan felt the need to explain. “So we should be safe and no one can listen in.”

“Except the owner,” Tina pointed out with a sour expression.

“We can trust him,” Jude said. She sank into the chair next to Declan. Declan worried at her exhale, how his mother’s limbs seemed stiff. “Charlie can be trusted.”

“Charlie?” Declan and Moira said at once.

Jude narrowed her eyes. “That’s Mr. James’ first name.”

Declan was appalled. Calling Mr. James ‘Charlie’ was like naming a Vipertooth Snuggles. It just didn’t work. More to the point, why was his mother on nick-name basis with Mr. James?

"Why does Mr. James need a room like this?" Moira asked quietly.

Jude narrowed her eyes but before she could answer, the door behind her opened again. Newt strode in. He had some dust on his jacket which he quickly brushed off and he removed the dark hat that mostly covered his wild hair. Declan appreciated how Newt somehow made his slightly ragged blue coat and askew bow tie seem tidy and okay. It was probably the accent.
“Well, we’re all here,” Tina said. She barely sat in her chair, her spine rigid and her fingers tapping on the table. “What do you have to say?”

Declan closed his eyes as Moira took in a sharp breath.

“Watch your tone, miss,” Jude snapped. “I won’t take disrespect in my place, especially from some MACUSA snitch.”

“What did you call me?”

Newt looked ready to step in but Declan sent him a pleading look. Tina and Jude then began a heated, silent staring contest. Declan reinforced his mental walls so the shouting in their heads wouldn’t be too disruptive. He focused on Moira. Watching her, focusing on her, always made everything else seem quiet.

For an untaught Legilimens, quiet can be a miracle.

Moira was staring at the black book. Her eyes were a bit dull. As the silence stretched on, Declan saw something like rage flicker in her eyes.

“Can we talk about the Seals?” she snapped. “Or are you going to snarl some more?”

Tina broke eye contact first. She nodded at Moira. Jude set her teeth. Newt visibly relaxed. Jude forward in her chair, crossing her arms on the table as she regarded Moira.

“I’m guessin’,” Jude started. “That you two just planned on going around to all the Seals and breaking them?”

Jude waved Tina off as she stared at Moira. Jude set her teeth. Newt visibly relaxed. Jude forward in her chair, crossing her arms on the table as she regarded Moira.

“I’m guessin’,” Jude started. “That you two just planned on going around to all the Seals and breaking them?”

“‘We were going to recruit more Wizards—”

Jude waved Tina off as she stared at Moira. “But for each Seal you would need a Spirit Walker to complete the spell. So wizards or none, Moira will be there for each Seal. Correct?”

Tina’s mouth closed. Her eyes darted to Moira. Moira was still avoiding their looks. Her arms were wrapped tight around her body.

“Was that your grand plan, Moira?” Jude said. “To break each Seal, until a Seal broke you?”

“I’m not going to die,” Moira said softly. “I wouldn’t do something if it was going to kill me.”

“There are worse things then dying, girl.”

Declan wanted to close his eyes but he couldn’t move. His body was flashing hot to cold as he watched Moira. Her hands were crossed on top of the table, her thumbs twisting around each other. Her eyes were lowered. Someone might have thought she was nervous. Shy. Declan knew better.

Moira was lying.

He couldn’t read her mind, but he knew it in his heart. Which meant Moira could die. She knew she could die.

And she was...okay with that?

“It won’t kill me,” Moira said again. “I know it.”

“You feel your power growing, don’t you?” Declan’s mother’s voice was coaxing. “The more
powerful the spirits are in the city, the more concentrated their force, the more it flows through you, right?"

“What do you mean?” Newt asked when Moira said nothing.

“You think her apartment always looks like the damn Amazon?” Jude snorted. “I’m guessin’ whatever MACUSA did to her had something to do with it, but she uses those plants like a magic depository. Extra magic goes in from panic, pain, fear, and out comes greenery. Basic territory when you’re a Spirit Walker.”

Tina gave a small gasp. Declan’s hands stung. He looked down. At some point he’d clenched his fists, and now his grip was so hard his nails were eating his skin. He loosened his hands.

Where were you? He could hear her voice, over and over. Where were you?

But he’d been doing something. He’d learned things, things that would help her.

If his mother would just get to the damn point.

“We know she’s strong,” Declan interrupted. His mother’s eyes landed hard on him and Declan swallowed, keeping his voice from wavering. “We know, too, that Moira breaking each Seal isn’t an option. Which is why we are here. So can you get to the point, please?”

His mother’s look was heavy and cold as a stone. Declan reminded himself that he was a patient person.

“Fine.” Jude faced Tina now. “What is today’s date?”

“The 20th,” Tina said.

“Good. Then you have two days.”

“Till what?”

Jude picked up the black book. She opened it to the section on Seals. She flipped to the last page, the one that had a sketch of a Spirit Walker floating over a breaking Seal. Declan had a hard time looking at the sketch, at the woman screaming and contorting in a flaming pit of raw spirit energy.

His mother stared at the page a moment. Declan couldn’t read her expression. Then his mother ran one finger tip down the center of the page. A thin line of light appeared and then the page split in half, and then again, until there were four new pages revealed.

Moira gasped. Declan felt himself drawn forward staring at the new ink.

Jude passed the book over to Moira. Moira snatched it up.

“How...” Moira whispered. "I thought I was the only..."

"There is more happening then you know, Moira." Jude murmured. "And you have never been the only one."

Moira stared at her gape-mouthed for a few moments. Declan waited. He wanted to read his mother's mind, but she'd just shove him out. He counted the seconds and his heart beats. He had questions bursting against his mouth but he kept his lips pressed tight.

He’d wait.
Moira’s eyes lowered to the book. A few seconds later, Moira’s eyes burst wide. She almost jumped out of her chair.

“The solstice!”

Jude smiled a little and she nodded. “Aye. The winter solstice.”

“The longest night of the year,” Newt mused. “And that...helps?”

Declan ran through his memory, scanning thoughts and remembered pages for notes on the power of the solstice. It helped with many spells of course. The celebration for the change of seasons, the threat to balance inciting chaos.

“The Spirits will be at their strongest,” Moira said.

“And that’s good?” Tina sounded concerned. “Won’t that make the Seal stronger?”

“Think of a Spirit Seal like a sort of dam,” Jude said. “And imagine that on the winter solstice, that dam will be trying to contain a hurricane.”

“And we have someone,” Declan spoke as he realized. “Who will be as strong as the hurricane. To hit the dam on both sides.”

Moira’s eyes lifted to his. He caught something brewing in her gaze, something turning behind those large grey eyes, but he couldn’t place it before she looked away.

“There are risks, of course,” Jude said. “Ones I’m guessing Moira already knows.”

Again, Declan found himself staring at his friend and waiting for her to speak. Again, she said nothing.

“So, we got a back up plan.” Jude said after a few seconds of awkward quiet. She turned the page and pointed. “The Rescindation.”

Newt leaned over Jude’s shoulder to look. But of course he couldn’t read the language. Declan could barely read it either. The image on the page showed a person, not the Spirit Walker character, throwing a bucket of something over the seal. Smoke or steam or something rose from the ground around him like a volcano.

“This...” Moira lifted an eyebrow. “Will be impossible.”

“What is it?” Declan demanded. Moira looked surprised. She offered him the book and Declan took it, his fingers making as little contact as possible with the pages. He felt colder holding the book.

Declan tried not to move his lips while he read, but it slowed him down. He had barely read the first sentence when there was a knock.

They all froze.

Jude rose and approached the door. Newt and Tina went to stand by the wall, away from the view of the door. Moira leaned to the side as well.

Jude barely opened the door.

“MACUSA’s comin’,” Mr. James’ voice was soft as silk. “Better you clear out, Judy.”
“Sure, Charlie. Thanks.”

Mr. James nodded. His eyes flashed on Declan. They widened slightly. Declan felt the pub owner’s shock, heard the words *alive the boy impossible wrong Falcons lies* and then, curiously, felt an icy chill of Mr James’ relief.

“Charlie,” Jude warned. Mr. James nodded and the door closed behind him.

“We don’t have much time,” Jude said.

“But we don’t have a plan!” Tina cried. She gestured out at Moira. “We just have a solstice and Moira.”

“That will be enough,” Jude said calmly.

“Well, I’m not letting her die because we did just enough.”

Declan felt hot and cold again. He had a sudden vivid image of him just grabbing Moira and taking her somewhere away. Far away. An island in the middle of the sea, or a house in the middle of the forest, where they would be away from everything and she would be safe.

He was staring at her. Moira blushed and looked away from everyone. Jude glowered at Tina.

“I’m not havin’ her die either. So, you’re going to march your skinny butt to your lovely Auror department and get as many of your colleagues to report to the Scorch hall on the dusk of the solstice, you hear? And we’ll go from there.”

Tina and Newt Dispparated a few minutes later. Declan and Moira, again, were traveling together. His mother had informed them of a safe apartment for both of them to stay in.

“Why do I have to stay there?” Declan asked as they prepared to leave. “It’s not like MACUSA is after me.”

“You’re not stupid,” his mother had replied, and then Apparated.

Declan sighed and wrapped his arm around Moira. He was worried about his family. Were his brothers and sisters safe? Would the Falcons target them? Was little Cait being kept inside, out of the way? And his brother Roland, especially, with his hot-head he could get into way too much trouble.

“What did she mean?” Moira asked. Declan shrugged, suddenly exhausted. He needed his energy to focus on Apparating anyway. Moira leaned into him a little. It was a fight to not hold her closer. There was a nasty feeling in Declan’s chest that even with their half-plan, and the information he knew, they would still have to lose something.

Tina was exhausted when she returned home with Newt. So when she saw Queenie sitting at the dining room table, she nearly fainted from relief. Not only was her sister home, which meant she wasn't running around being attacked or anything, that meant that someone who could *cook* was in the house. Queenie read all those thoughts and laughed.

"I guess it's a good thing I went to the market, huh?" she said.

"Where have you been?" Tina asked.

"Here and there," Queenie smiled, evasive. Tina tried asking again, and then again later while they
were dicing vegetables and blending the sauce, but each time Queenie evaded. Tina didn't want to have to force her sister to tell her anything, so she stayed patient. Only, she wasn't good at being patient. So she relayed what happened since they'd left. It was a longer than Tina expected, and many of Queenie's questions went unanswered. Setting the table by hand, with Queenie by her side, served to calm Tina down after reliving some of the darker details.

Or, it was supposed to calm things down to a normal. Until Queenie, after a long pause, said.

“It would be nice, though, wouldn’t it? If we could all go out together sometime.”

“All?” Tina said.

“Yeah, you know, you and Newt,” Queenie's eyes flickered up, sharp and dreamy. "And me and Jacob.”

Tina kept setting the plates. Queenie sighed, smiling.

“We could all go dancing, you know? Or I know this place with the best sax player and the singer is a genius. We could be out all night, watch the sunrise the next morning.”

“We’re not kids anymore, Queenie.”

“I know but it just all seems more ridiculous to me.”

Tina heard a storm brewing in Queenie’s voice. She didn’t interrupt as her sister continued. “It just seems ridiculous that you can go out with Newt and go to parties or the park or anywhere together but me and Jacob, we have to hide. Is our love uglier somehow?”

“Queenie—“

“I mean, it just doesn’t make sense! In England you can marry No Majs and I don’t see the security of their country collapsing.”

“It’s not the same.” Tina felt like she was scrambling for pieces of thread on the floor. “England doesn’t have the same kind of history as we do.”

“Well look at Jacob, then,” Queenie said. “He knows what we are and he hasn’t attacked us.”

“That’s one No Maj, Queenie. We can’t tell how they will all react, and since we’re obviously the minority—“

“No Majs are capable of reason and empathy just like we are! They aren’t some herd of animals. I mean, you said where Moira lives that No Maj’s know about magic, right? And they’re not planning any coup for power or anything.”

“Bad example,” Tina muttered. But Queenie had had enough. She slammed the last cup onto the table so hard that the rest of the glassware rattled. Tina looked up. Her sister’s face was red with fury, her eyes glittering. Tina was shocked. She couldn’t remember the last time she'd seen her sister so angry. Queenie leaned her weight on the table and smiled without humor.

“What are the odds, right? It's not like we can choose, yet I get punished for it. Tina,” Queenie's voice almost cracked. “Count yourself lucky that you fell in love with a wizard instead of a No Maj.”

“Queenie?”

Queenie turned on her heel and stormed to the door.
“Queenie!”

The door slammed.

Tina braced her hands against the dining chairs. She took a few deep breaths to calm herself down. She wasn’t unused to Queenie’s outbursts, but it had been a while since her sister had gone so far as to storm out. Normally, Tina would just wait for her to come home. Maybe come up with some decent counter argument stop what ever they were fighting about.

The problem was, Tina couldn’t think of many arguments against what her sister said. It made her sick that her sister couldn’t be with someone she loved because politics decided Jacob was somehow less than, or somehow more dangerous, than any random wizard. It didn’t make sense unless you were afraid. And Tina was growing less afraid every day.

Tina ran her hands through her hair and ventured over to the suitcase. She knocked on the leather. After a few seconds the case opened. Newt’s voice carried out,

“I’ll be up in a minute!”

Tina shook her head and descended. The sounds of the creatures washed over her as she landed in the work space. Instead of going outside though Tina just sank onto the ladder, set her head in her hands, and waited.

For Newt, a “minute” soon stretched into almost an hour. It had been trying business caring for everyone while also helping Tina. He didn’t really expect to sleep much tonight. When he finished, he went over to one of his worktables to wash his hands. The water was cold and refreshing. He nearly threw some on his face until he remembered that Tina would be serving dinner soon.

Soon. How long...

Newt checked his watch, swore, then rushed over towards the cabin. When he opened the door, he was already imagining apologies for his lateness. Instead, he heard someone breathing. Newt froze.

Tina was asleep on the ladder.

Newt blinked then crept forward. Tina’s hair was half askew and her hands were clasped together like she’d been leaning them on her knees. He had no idea she was so exhausted.

“Tina,” he whispered, shaking her.

Tina bolted out of sleep. She nearly cracked her head on the ladder. She blinked a few times at him before focusing. “What happened?”

“You were just asleep,” Newt said.

Tina’s shook her head. “Dinner?”

“Uh,” Newt looked around. “Upstairs, maybe?”

Tina seemed fully awake now. Her eyes darkened. Actually, her whole expression seemed to wilt. Newt noticed.

“Is something wrong?” he asked.
“No,” Tina answered too fast before she began to climb.

Tina’s thoughts were racing because when Newt had woken her, and she’d seen him leaning over her looking so concerned, she had heard Queenie’s voice so clearly.

*Count yourself lucky that you fell in love with a wizard.*

When they reached the dining room, Newt said, “Where’s Queenie?”

“She went out.”

Tina saw Newt glance at the three table settings. His eyes flickered but he said nothing about it. “What are we having?”

“Roast.” Tina gave an apologetic smile. “I’m not as good as Queenie at cooking.”

“That’s alright,” Newt smiled and followed Tina into the kitchen. “I don’t mind helping.”

“Yeah?”

“Sure.”

Tina shrugged. “Okay. Then can you stir the sauce over there?”

“Really? Stirring sauce?”

“It’s either stir sauce or sit out of the way.”

Tina’s voice was too sharp. Newt was quiet behind her. Not sure what else to do, Tina looked into the oven. The smell of the meat seemed fine so she closed it. She braced her hands against the counter.

“Sorry,” Tina said.

Newt didn’t say anything. Tina was almost scared to turn around.

“I got in a fight with Queenie.” Tina explained. “She stormed out.”

Still, Newt said nothing. Tina could not bear the silence anymore. She turned. Newt leaned against one of the counters. His arms were crossed in a defensive pose and his eyes were lowered to the floor.

“I’m sorry,” Tina said, drawing towards him. “I shouldn’t have yelled. Or snapped at you.”

Newt’s smile was hesitant. “It’s been a long day. I can understand your frustration.”

“It’s been the same for you and you’re not snapping at me.”

Newt’s smile became a bit more genuine. “Maybe we just have different ways of coping with stress.”

“What’s your’s?”

“Well, looking after my creatures for one. It clears my head pretty well.”

“And two?”
Newt blinked. “Two?”

Tina leaned closer to him. Newt straightened against the counter top. Smiling, Tina said, “Yes, two. What else do you do for stress relief?”

Newt’s pupils expanded. Otherwise, he showed no other reactions to her. He said, “Well, there hasn’t been much anything else to do.” Tina moved a little closer, enough to share breath but not touching him. He took a deep breath. “I normally try different things to relieve...stress.” His voice grew wry. “It’s been a bit trying recently.”

Testing his control, she put her mouth near his ear.

“Tell me about it,” she whispered.

Newt could move fast when he wanted to. One hand seized her waist and the other flew into her hair before his mouth came down over her’s. Tina gasped in his tight grip. His mouth demanded and she gave, and she felt her spine going lax and her eyes rolling back in her head as he took what he wanted.

It was over too soon.

Newt set Tina back, just a little, his chest heaving. Tina was light-headed.

“That works too,” Newt said unevenly.

“Mhmm,” Tina replied. She leaned forward again but Newt kept a firm distance. He smiled.

“Dinner first, right? We haven’t eaten in a while.”

“Dinner first,” Tina raised an eyebrow. “And after dinner...?”

Newt blushed. “Let’s get through dinner first.”

“How does your mum know about this apartment?” Moira asked.

“Dunno.”

“Or better, why does she have a convenient safe house?”

“Really don’t know.”

“Or even better, what does—“

“Moira.”

“Fine. Sorry.”

They were in an small studio apartment a few stories over a bakery. Moira could smell fresh bread coming through the one small window as she paced. Inside the apartment there was two narrow beds neatly made with a table between them. The kitchen consisted of a tiny sink and a single burner. The ice box had a few things already in it, and the open shelves were lined with more food. A few banged-up pots and pans hung from the ceiling.

There wasn’t electricity. Moira and Declan had used magic to light the sconces but even then the
room was dim save for whatever light the window let in. It was also freezing. The garret seemed to be stuffed with ash, and Moira had to make do with a pitifully small fire.

Moira gazed down at the street. In the dark, people did not wander. The few that were out had their collars up and their heads down. A few young men were laughing on the corner, not pretending to be sober as they yelled at people passing. Occasionally they threw rocks.

Falcons, Moira thought of the laughing young men. Young ones. The older ones at least tried to be discreet.

But the real problem was on the building just across the window. Moira hadn’t known the symbol until Declan explained it, but then she remembered seeing it in other places, on thin pamphlets, in newspapers, spray painted in dark alleyways.

Only this time the symbol was spray painted two stories high for a main street to see. A triangle, circle, and a line. She already saw a few wizards in long, dark coats fixing the situation as best they could by covering it.

“Maybe it’s all Grindelwald,” Moira mused. “Maybe he’s planned this whole thing.”

The bed creaked from where Declan was lying. He said, “I doubt the great and terrible Grindelwald cares about us.”

“But someone cares about him.” Moira pointed to the huge symbol on the building.

“Fanatics.” Declan’s voice was flat. “Nothing new there.”

“But they’re bolder.”

“Moira, can we just not plot for a second?”

Moira turned. Declan was lying on his back. His feet dangled off the end of the bed. His hands were laid flat on his chest and his eyes were closed. He looked pale and shiny.

Suspicion rose in Moira. She drifted closer. Letting her guard down a little, she scanned his aura.

Grey teemed through the usual blue and gold, swarming like maggots in a rotten plant. Moira gasped.

“Declan, you’re ill!”

“No shit,” Declan tried to smile but coughed instead. “It’s not an illness. Just used too much.”

Moira looked around for something to kneel on. Not finding anything she was forced to kneel on the hardwood floor. She snatched up Declan’s hand. It was burning hot when she laid it against her cheek. His Trades pulsed darkly. His skin was mottled with burn scars that hadn’t healed well. Moira stared at the poorly healed wounds. They were burn wounds, and recent.

“Did you heal yourself?”

“No shit,” Declan tried to smile but coughed instead. “It’s not an illness. Just used too much.”

Moira shrugged and coughed again. Now weird red patches were developing on neck, spreading to his face. He began to shiver. The sweat was pouring profusely now, beading across his face and
Moira’s eyes widened. This was stage three. There was only four stages. Shit. Shit shit shit shit...

With a wave of her hand a glass flew into her grip. Another spell filled it with water and she shoved it towards his mouth. His head lolled to the side. Water splashed across his face and shirt. Grasping his hair, she magically refilled the glass then forced his mouth open.

“Drink,” she ordered. “Dehydration is part of it.”

“I’m not—“ Declan swallowed a few times. “I’m not hungover, Moira.”

“I know what I’m talking about,” Moira snapped. “Without a wand, drawing on magic is extremely taxing to the physical body. Using too much of it results in your body crashing, the way it does when coming off an adrenaline—“

“Great talk.” Declan interrupted. He shook his head. “Just get me more water. And a blanket. I’ll be fine.”

Moira muttered a few expletives to describe what he really was before doing both those things. Then she tended him.

An hour passed. Declan did not improve, but he didn’t get worse. Moira scanned her limited supplies of medicines. Her best cure was in her apartment but she would make do with what she had. Her heart was beating in a peculiar way, in stutters and stops. Sometimes she found herself inhaling in loudly like she’d forgotten to breathe. Always she was watching him.

Declan rolled around a lot. His jaw would tighten like he was holding back a cry and his face would scrunch tight. Stage three had migraines too. She used her strongest fever reducer. Most of the cure came from rest, though, and she had no medicine to speed that process up. His body was fighting the way it would an infection. That’s what she told herself.

It was well into the night when Declan went still. Moira looked up from her hands. Panic wanted to grip her but she refused.

His breathing was regular. She checked his temperature and though it was hot it didn’t scald her. Then she checked his pulse. She could feel it lowering even before she drew away.

He was asleep. Resting. Moira sighed and sat back. Her lower back ached from sitting in an awkward position for so long. She rose and stretched, pacing over to the window.

The streets were deserted. The Grindelwald marking was completely gone. Lights glowed in the opposite windows, but everyone had their curtains down. Moira drew theirs down as well. The room darkened further, and she channeled some of her magic into the lights, chasing the shadows into the corners.

She braced herself against the window frame.

Two days till the solstice. Two days they weren’t supposed to leave this room. Two days would last forever.

Declan snored like a moose, cutting through her thoughts. Moira smiled.

At least she wouldn’t be alone.
Chapter End Notes

Everybody I am SOO excited for the next chapter you have no idea ;) ;) :) Happy holidays all around, and thanks for the reads!
The Waiting Interrupted

Chapter Summary

The best made plans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tina thought she would have a hard time focusing during dinner. It was just the two of them in her home, for once. She’d kept the candles low. Newt had insisted they sit at a corner of the table, rather than across from each other.

“It feels like an interview or something,” Newt said, blushing. “and I can’t see you through the candles half the time.”

It was easier to talk with him at her elbow rather than across from her. He also had a nice profile that she didn’t usually get to look at for long.

They talked about a lot of things. Newt asked about her family a lot, but Tina noticed he didn’t expand much on his. Considering the little she knew of his brother’s return from the war, she decided not to press. Talking about her own mother wasn’t easy. Families, generally, were not easy.

“Well,” Tina looked down. “Tell me about...well, what’s England like now that your book is published?”

“I couldn’t really say,” Newt sounded amused by the idea. “My research removes me from people. I’ve had to move a couple of times because people with cameras keep showing up.”


“People keep asking me what I will write next.” Newt’s face tightened. “I don’t really know the answer to that. It’s not like the creatures are narrating a book series to me.”

“People are just excited, is all.” Tina took his hand, smiling. “You’ve done a great thing, you know.”

“I just wish I could do great things privately.”

Tina laughed and released his hand to return to eating. They talked about different topics, and if they did lapse into silence it wasn’t uncomfortable. There was one tense moment when Tina glanced at the other two empty chairs and wondered where Queenie had gone. She didn’t like the idea of her sister having some love affair in the middle of a political crisis but such things were outside her control.

When they finished eating, Newt asked to help with the clean up as well. Tina felt like doing the dishes by hand. She hoped the menial work would calm her thoughts. She dried while Newt washed. There was an easy rhythm to their movements.

“A knife for your thoughts?” Newt asked.
Tina started. Newt was holding a dripping bread knife and smiling. Tina took it from him and felt embarrassed. “Sorry. I’m not really thinking anything.” Which sounded stupid when she said it aloud. “I mean, I’m just a bit tired and out of it.”

Newt hummed in reply. It was a tune that Tina didn’t recognize. He wasn’t as bad at matching pitch as he thought he was.

Tina kept watching him, drying a plate absently. He swayed a little while he hummed. His shirtsleeves were rolled up past his elbows, revealing the muscles and scars of his forearms. Tina used to mock girl’s for finding something so simple, so attractive. She’d obviously been a fool.

Newt leaned up to hang a sauce pan to dry. His shoulders rippled with the movement and his body lengthened and bent with ease.

Tina’s mouth went dry.

His eyes were half hooded. When he handed her another plate, he seemed startled to find her watching him.

“What?” he said.

“You have soap in your hair.” Tina said.

Newt reached up on instinct and dug his soapy fingers into his hair. She was laughing by the time he realized what had happened. When he removed his hands, his hair stuck up straight up in clumps, the red tipped with white foam.

He glared from his hands to her. “Happy?”

“Ecstatic,” Tina grinned.

Newt slapped some water at her. She squealed, ducking out of the way as she giggled like a teenager.

“Careful,” she said.

Newt’s eyes glittered with mirth. “Or what?”

Tina stared at him a moment, then, “Oh, you asked for it.”

After that it was simply a matter of who’s hands got into the soap water first. It happened to be Newt. He flung water at Tina. Tina retaliated by grabbing a cup and dumping water straight onto his head.

He sputtered, water dripping over his face as he laughed. then he went for his wand. With a quick spell, bubbles exploded out of the sink. Delighted, Tina swatted the suds away. Bubbles as big as her head floated around the ceiling. The floor was soon drenched. Tina smeared soap through Newt’s hair and over his face, then he wrapped an arm around her and dipped her so her head plunged backwards towards the sink and the tower of bubbles.

“Ah!” Tina squealed. “Truce! Not my hair!”

Newt paused. He was grinning like an idiot. “You promise?”

Tina could feel the bubbles popping behind her. The floor was slippery under her feet and she gripped Newt's shoulder's for support. The counter was braced against her back.
Newt loosened his hold threateningly and Tina said, “Promise!”

Newt laughed down on her. His voice carried through the air and the bubbles seemed to dance with it. “I’ll take you for it, then.”

Tina looked up into Newt’s dripping, laughing face, and suddenly she went still. She was aware of his hands braced around her, of how her body was bent backwards against his. Under his. His warmth pressed against her though his body was a few inches away.

Her arms slid up his shoulders to wrap around his neck. She tugged a little and then his eyes focused on her with such an intensity that she almost shivered.

“Well,” Tina said. “What now, Mr. Scamander?”

His hands tightened on her. Tina sighed. Her body felt loose, languid, and she smiled.

Instead of drawing her closer, Newt simply moved forward, pressing her back against the counter. She was reliant on his arms or she’d collapse and the simple strength of him made her knees weak.

His lips captured her’s. Little shivers danced up and down her body. Her desire heated to a boil almost instantly and Tina deepened the kiss, running her fingertips over his face before diving into his hair. Her returned her enthusiasm in kind, his touch searching and gentle as his hands roved over her body.

Tina wondered if it would always feel like ages since the last time she kissed him.

Newt straightened, taking her with him and not breaking the kiss. Every inch of connection burned between them. He tasted like riches. Tina wanted to revel in it.

Still, Newt was Newt. He drew back. Breathing fast, he met her eyes.

“You’re wet.”

Tina’s eyes widened. Newt’s face turned so red that she thought the water might evaporate off of him. He stammered. “I mean…if you wanted to shower, and then I would so that we wouldn’t be, you know, with the suds and everything, it might—“

Tina laid a hand against his mouth. Gratitude flickered in his eyes.

“I’ll shower,” she said. Then she removed her hand and placed another kiss to his mouth. It was a tender brush, sweet and vulnerable.

For a moment, Newt’s hands didn’t let her go.

“This is real,” he murmured. “I can’t believe it sometimes.”

It was a feeling she’d often had herself. She almost laughed. She kissed his cheek. “Shower. I’ll find you after.”

He nodded and released her.

Needless to say Tina took far longer than usual in the shower. She was drying her hair when she found herself just staring into the mirror. Her eyes were dancing, her skin flushed. But that was fading to paleness.
Tina was nervous.

It wasn’t so much the sex. Or, that’s what she told herself. It was the...intimacy. When she thought about it from a distance, they should have slept together way before this. It would have been less complicated. She wouldn’t be worried about displeasing him, or how he would look at her the next morning, or just...it would have meant something different. But now her emotions were all tied up in it.

She was tied up with him.

What did he like? How much experience did he have? How did it compare to her’s? Would was he expecting from her?

Tina braced her hands against the sink and took deep breaths. She wished Queenie was here, someone to ask questions to. But Queenie was God knew where. Tina should be worried about that. For a ridiculous moment she seized on the idea. Maybe she would just go looking for her sister. She didn’t have to do any of this now.

Tina glanced behind her. She’d brought in a ridiculous, short silk nightgown that Queenie had bought for her last year, and then her usual cotton pajamas. She put on her pajamas and left the gown in the bath.

The apartment was quiet and cold. Shivering, Tina stoked the fire in the living room, before padding around to the guest bedroom.

It was empty.

Tina felt a small twinge of shock, followed by fear. The silence in the apartment hammered at her ears. She couldn’t help thinking of MACUSA, of Falcons, of someone taking Newt away. She drifted towards the room she and Queenie shared.

He wasn’t there either.

She ignored her mounting panic and ventured back to the guest room. Inside, she peered under the dresser, into the closet. On the closet floor was the suitcase. It was closed and unlocked. Tina didn’t need another invitation besides that. She Summoned her stronger shoes before venturing in.

As she descended the ladder, the door to the shed opened. Tina froze. Framed in the doorway, Newt had his back to her and he was speaking to...someone outside.

“Dougal, we talked about this,” Newt said. “You take care of Pickett when I’m away, so he doesn’t have as much separation anxiety...No, Pickett. Pickett, you can’t come. Privacy. Don’t give me that look. Now, here go with Dougal and...”

Newt finally closed the door. He braced his hands against it as if he expected someone to try and break it down.

“Everything okay?” Tina asked.

Newt spun. He hit his head on one of the hanging cages and he yelped. Tina started towards him.

“Hey, you okay? It’s not bleeding is it...”

Tina pulled his hands away and looked at the mark. There wasn’t a deep cut but she knew how head wounds could bleed if they wanted to. Newt handed her a handkerchief. Surprised, she drew close, took it, then laid it against the wound.
“You got peroxide?” Tina asked.

“A healing spell should be fine,” Newt said.

Tina nodded and thought. After a moment, she said, “Tergeo.” The blood cleared from the wound and she had a better sense of its size, depth. That being short, but deeper than she would have liked.

“Will it need a bandage?” he asked.

“Probably,” Tina said. “Here, sit down.”

“I can heal it,” he said, sitting anyway. “I’d feel ridiculous with a bandage on my head.”

Tina nodded. She pointed her wand. “Episkey.”

“How is it now?” Newt asked.

Tina was still staring at his head. There was a small pink mark but she didn’t think it would scar.

“Pretty good,” Tina said. “Do you want to look for yourself?”

“No. I trust you.”

Tina looked down. Newt had his eyes averted to the side. His skin was flushed. She realized a bit belatedly that because of their positioning his eyes were about level with her breasts. Her imagination decided to step in at that point and the sudden rush of wanting nearly had her stepping back.

Instead, she lowered her hand, and tilted his face up towards her’s. He’d forgotten to shave and his jaw scratched against her palm a little. Her heart was racing but his eyes met her’s.

As she leaned forward, his eyes darkened. She pressed a kiss to his forehead. He smelled clean and woody somehow. Drifting, she kissed just under his jaw. Her heart flew as she pulled back a little and saw his eyes had drifted shut. It reminded her of before, when he’d kissed her on the same steps. It gave her another rush of power, confidence, and she just decided.

Her lips collided with his.

Newt made a surprised sound and his hands braced on her hips. Tina’s fingers entangled in his thick hair, absorbing the taste and scent of him till she was dizzy with it.

Newt suddenly rose and with a flash she felt the floor drop out from under her. Tina would have screamed against Newt’s mouth if he didn’t lock a hand around her to keep her in place. Her arms clung to him.

Her feet landed. She opened her eyes. Newt released her.

They were in a small bedroom that Tina did not recognize. The furniture was well-worn but not shabby, the bed wrought iron and covered with a warm quilt. A window to the side revealed the Kyran’s circling around their tree in the distance. The colors painted the simple white-washed walls rose and gold and illuminated the dust motes in the warm, still air.

She turned. Newt stood beside the bed. His hands were in his pockets. Belatedly, she realized that at some point she’d torn the first few buttons of his sleep shirt open, and his hair was an absolute mess.

What had he thought? She wondered. Had she been too forward? Did he think she was one of those girls? What did he want?
Newt still wasn’t looking at her. His hands withdrew from his pockets onto to fist by his sides. They stood too far away from each other. Tina suddenly felt both old and young at the same time.

“This is a nice room,” Tina finally said. Her voice sounded tinny. She crossed her arms.

“I created it,” Newt said.

“I assumed that,” Tina said.

“Only recently, though.”

“Oh,” Tina said.

Newt lifted his head. The golden light jumped into his eyes, making them as bright as a cat’s. He looked scared and hopeful.

“Tina,” he said. “What do you want?”

When Tina didn’t reply, Newt continued on. “Because I want you to be happy. And I don’t want you to think you have to do anything for...for my sake. I mean, not exactly but—“ Newt sighed with total exasperation. “Bugger. I’m just making a mess of this now.”

Yet his words loosened much of the tension in Tina’s chest. That’s exactly what this was. A mess. A mess of emotions and wants and needs colliding inside her.

“That’s how it should be,” Tina murmured, almost to herself.

Newt gazed at her. Then, taking a deep breath, he walked towards her. He stopped in front of her. Tina met his searching look. He cradled her face gently and she leaned into his touch.

“We can stop,” he whispered. "At anytime."

“Yes,” Tina agreed. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him.

She kept this one slow, letting her needs be quiet coals in her chest. She kept her touch slow, making sure he was okay even as he groaned and pressed her back against the wall with his body so she could feel every inch of him pressed against her, the contact making their clothing feel invisible. Making her want their clothing gone.

Tina worked the buttons on his shirt open. Newt shrugged it off the rest of the way but didn’t go for her clothes, allowing her to explore his skin with her fingertips, shivering as she traced his scars. She pulled back and kissed along his neck, his shoulders. Her toungue trailed the grooves of his collarbones and Newt made a stifled sound before he began to move back. Tina followed him to the bed, eager, the nerves fading.

She laid down first. For the first time he didn’t hesitate as he joined her, moving over her body and kissing her. Still, he didn’t try to remove her clothes. But Tina wanted skin against skin so her hands went to the hem of her shirt.

Sensing the motion, Newt drew back. His pupils were blown wide and his hair was ragged as he braced himself over her, the muscles in his arms tensing. His eyes watching.

Tina’s breath skipped. Carefully, she drew her shirt off. The rustled of fabric seemed loud in the room. When it was removed Newt’s eyes instantly went to her breasts. His lips parted and he seemed to move forward without thinking, but he hesitated, looking up at her.
If Tina thought she’d wanted before, it didn’t compare to how she wanted now. Her fingers dove to his shoulders and yanked him forward. Her mouth closed over his but he was matching her force, now, as he bore her back against the soft quilt. His hands trapped her’s beside her head and then he was kissing down her throat, over her collarbones—slowly, Tina realized, and even as she arched for more he took his time, exploring her with his mouth, biting lightly on her shoulder, then down until his mouth finally closed over her breast. Tina’s back bowed up to him. He made a sound of approval and continued, his teeth sliding so gently it was almost like torture.

He lifted his mouth back to her’s. Her body was on fire. Tina rocked her hips. Again, she reached for his clothes first. He didn’t object, helping her remove his trousers. Her fingers trailed down before she made a half choked sound at realizing he hadn’t worn anything beneath his trousers.

Her hand closed over his length. Newt swore and his stomach locked, his arms tense.

Tina smiled, watching him. “Okay?”

Newt nodded. But she only had her hand on him for maybe a minute before he reached down and stopped her, drawing her hand up and pinning it gently to the mattress.

“I need more of you.” Newt said. “If you keep touching me, I can’t enjoy you.”

His voice was low and ragged and made Tina’s insides melt. Newt noticed. He tilted his head and his eyes drifted almost lazily over her body. “You’re beautiful, Tina.”

Tina flushed and her breath caught as her core tightened. Newt smiled and kissed her, deep, abosorbing. Again, the gentleness of him permeated every touch, leaving her spellbound. Tina’s body ached and ached for more.

“I’ve thought of this,” Newt murmured. “For ages.”

He trailed kisses down again, making Tina twist under his grip, trying to seek some kind of release.

“I’ve thought of where and how,” Newt said, his breath hot on her belly. “But it’s not the same.”

He collected her hands in one of his, then trailed his fingers under her waistband. Her skin tensed and trembled under his touch, but he didn’t go lower, teasing her. Tina whimpered. She wanted him now.

“Like that,” he said. “I couldn’t imagine your sounds as I touched you.”

He drew the rest of her pajamas off, taking her underwear with it. He released her hands as he braced his hands on either side of her hips and kissed her between her legs.

Tina cried out his name. It wasn’t enough. It wasn’t enough.

“I think too much,” Newt said. “And speak too much too.”

Then his mouth was on her, between her legs, toungue and teeth, and Tina just held onto the sheets, her head whipping from side to side as she tried to keep still. It was seconds and ages before she finally found release with a scream.

Newt rose over her and kissed her, silencing her cries as the waves of pleasure crashed over her. He shifted her under him, aligning carefully. Their eyes met with the sound of collision. Intimacy layered over the raw pleasure, and Tina smiled. She laid her hand against his rough cheek, feeling his pulse racing against her’s.
“Yes,” Tina said. “Now, Newt.”

Newt nodded and kissed her lightly. His muscles trembled with control, entering slowly. There was no pain, though, and Tina sighed as he filled her completely. Her hands gripped his hips, keeping him there, savoring the feeling of being one with him.

He kissed her arched neck. “Okay?”

“More than,” she whispered, and then she moved her hips under his. Newt swore again and Tina smiled.

His hands twined in her’s at some point. He was kissing her. They were connected, together, and Tina lost track of time and space, anything but Newt, his taste, his skin, his breath and his groans, and she barely heard her own screams as she found release again and he followed her.

Moira woke when a hand shook her shoulder. She went to her knives on instinct but the grip jumped to her wrists, trapping her.

“It’s me.”

Declan’s voice drifted through her thoughts. She shook her head and looked up to see him crouched in front of her. He gave a wary smile before releasing her hands. After a few blinks, she shoved him away.

“Don’t sneak up on me like that,” she snapped, but he just smiled wider. It was a soft look. She fought the urge to shove him again but rose, pacing towards the window.

The sun rose. She’d probably only been asleep for a few hours. It felt like ages. And still so many more hours to go.

“I hate it too,” Declan offered.

Moira sighed. “It’s protection, I guess.”

“Protection is so boring.”

From his makeshift perch, Kai gave an agreeing chirp. Moira glared at both of them and said, “Don’t be such a child.”

“I’m not a child.” Declan smiled, bright and quick. “But I’m as bored as one. You think my mum would leave us some cards or something.”

“I’ll make food,” Moira offered instead and Declan nodded eagerly. She opened one of the cans of soup and sniffed it. She fought the recoil, but she had eaten worse when time called for it.

“So,” Declan said.

Moira felt her hair rise. She didn’t know why. She didn’t turn. “Yeah?”

“Are we not going to talk about it?”

Moira thought of a million things. The first, and what should not have been the first, was the rooftop. What passed between them. Then there was the half-interrogation with his mother, the realization she’d seen in his eyes when she said that she might die, the pain of the actual MACUSA
interrogation...

“Talk about what?” Moira replied.

“The obvious one, of course.”

His eyes were glowing. The bastard was enjoying this. Moira crossed her arms and scowled. "Maybe you should just tell me, since I'm obviously not keeping up."

“I'd rather you guess."

“All you do is talk,” Moira's voice was sharper than she intended. “Or you don't, and that's what makes you a problem."

The humor faded from his eyes. His brows drew together. He almost looked angry. "What?"

Moira's heart skipped. She just shook her head and turned, giving him her back. She could feel his emotions simmering behind her though. It wasn't pleasant.

"Sorry," Moira finally said. "Didn't mean to snap."

She heard him make a little humming sound. Hopefully, that meant they were okay.

"Want to hear a joke?" Declan asked suddenly.

Moira glanced over her shoulder. "Seriously? Now?"

“Well, I’ve recovered from over using my magic, I’m currently trapped in an apartment with my best friend to hide from my other best friend, and of course, the world is about to end apparently. So, yes, now.”

Declan had sunk onto the bed. Though he smiled his eyes were distant and his fingers had dug into the bed sheets.

She didn’t know if she should go to him or not. So instead she used some magic to heat the soup faster, and poured it into each bowl before setting it on the table. Declan sat and they ate together. Kai woke from sleeping in the corner and landed on Moira’s shoulders. She offered him some of her soup. He took it, but not without squawking a few times in disgust. It was a small worry, feeding Kai while everything else was going on, but she was trying her best not to fixate on it too much. Kai gave her a friendly head nudge before flying to the window. Moira rose and let him go out. His brilliant feathers flashed in the air a moment before he vanished above the buildings.

Moira was too distracted by her creature to notice that Declan had stopped eating and was staring at her.

“There’s something I need to ask you,” Declan said.

“Okay,” Moira said.

“I didn’t get a chance to read it in the book. But does the Rescindation...what does it mean?”

Moira blinked. That’s what he wanted to talk about? There was no point to it. It would be impossible. More impossible then fifty Aurors deciding not to kill her for being a walking monster.

“We have hours,” Declan reminded her.
He wasn’t wrong. Moira started, “The Rescindation is…” But she trailed off. Moira leaned back against the window sill. “It’s impossible. No point in thinking on it.”

“Sure.”

Moira huffed. “Fine. It’s another way to break up the Seals. It requires the original creator of the Seals to break the first Seal created. If the creator does it, the other Seals become void. But that of course is going to be impossible because Markus has turned into some power crazy fu—”

Declan’s eyes widened. He paled. He looked like someone had just died in front of him.

“So that’s why.”

“What?” Moira snapped. “What is it?”

Declan’s eyes shone. He rose and joined her by the window. He looked out for a few moments. His expression was tense, his shoulders drawn tight like he was bracing cement blocks on his hands.

She waited. After a moment, he spun and grabbed her hands. Moira jumped. His fingers were icy. His eyes, on the other hand, were ablaze on her’s.

“If I told you the Rescindation was possible," he said. "Would you trust me?"

Moira stared wide-eyed up at him. She couldn’t speak.

"I need to know now," Declan's grip was almost painful. "Please, Moira."

"I always trust you," Moira said. Declan's expression softened, just slightly. He sighed.

Then someone pounded on the front door.

Moira tried to turn but Declan still gripped her hands. His eyes were closed and he breathed deeply. Moira's eyes widened. He was reading the thoughts of whoever was outside. Had to be.

“Falcons?” Moira whispered to him.

“No point in whispering,” Declan said. His eyes opened. "Well. Here it goes."

The door exploded open, slamming both of them back into the wall.

Chapter End Notes

(In Maui voice) What can I say...except...you're welcome :) 
I mean honestly, when do I ever let perfectly good plans stick around. Eh? So yea, incoming action as we wind down to the finale.

Thanks for the reads!

~lize
Moira saw the world turn sideways and around, spinning and smoking. There was fire. She couldn’t tell from where but the smoke covered all. Then someone was dragging her away, no dragging her up, and then both of them were plastered to the ceiling, a shield shimmering over them to keep them in place. The smoke billowed around it. Moira shook her head and the ringing faded and Declan was looking at her. He still held her hands. Their heads were together, their feet pointing in opposite directions, her back flat against the ceiling...she focused on his grip, on the magic he was reaching out to her. She accepted the connection. Without speaking aloud, she said, Falcons?

Declan nodded. We don’t have much time.

Moira could tell. Through the smoke she saw four people enter the room, their faces hooded. The one in front seemed familiar, somehow. A tuft of brown hair stuck out from just under the hood and the figure moved gracefully through the wreckage, whereas the other three blundered into the overturned beds, crunched over the broken glass and the overturned cans and table...

Moira’s thoughts went first to the door. But it was covered with a red sheen of light, probably to keep in the smoke and sound and escapees. It was over the windows too.

Below, the brunette young man said something to one of the men, who nodded and lifted up the iron bed, turning it around like it was made of cardboard. After a few seconds it dropped the bed with a clang. Moira swallowed hard.

Moira.

Moira looked to Declan. Her friend was trying to smile. If I jump down, you can go while I distract the four of them—

And die? Moira glared. Not happening.

One of the hooded men ripped a cupboard out of the wall and turned it upside down. He grunted when only cans poured out, then threw it down. He went to the next.

Don’t be ridiculous, Declan replied. I’m not going to die. I’ll get taken hostage, maybe tortured, but —

Moira’s eyes widened with a new idea. Declan’s eyes narrowed in response, though his smile turned more genuine. She didn’t have to hear his thoughts. He already liked her idea.

Before she could explain, though, one of the guys shouted. Moira’s heart stopped. The men weren’t looking at the ceiling. Rather two of them looked like they were fighting among themselves. One tore at the arm of the other, and Moira gasped as the arm came clear off, with no blood spattering but
a terrible soft ripping sound—

“Hey!” the brunette shouted and the hood fell back. It was Lucas, one of the few Falcons that Moira recognized. Declan inhaled sharply. Lucas seethed, “What the hell are you two blocks doing? Get off him!”

But the one without an arm had the other in a headlock. The hood on the captured one fell back, revealing a half rotting face with empty, dead eyes. With another soft rip, the head of the dead man was torn off. The body dropped. The other dead man held the head stupidly.

Moira looked at Declan. Declan nodded, and let go of her hands, and vanished from her sight.

Below, Lucas had turned a shade of green. He shook himself and said in a shaking voice, “Look, Alexander gave you lot to me so you better listen when—”

“Lucas.”

Declan’s voice rang in the room, silencing them. Lucas spun. He paled when he saw nothing, glancing from side to side. Declan spoke again.

“Lucas, since when did you work with the dead men?”

“Since you left us, asshole,” Lucas snapped. But he was sweating as he spun around, trying to trace Declan’s voice.

Moira kept still but relaxed her gaze, until auras seeped through. Lucas’ cohorts, the “dead men”, gave off no light. Lucas’ seethed with anxious lavender and green. Declan’s was silver and blue, and it hovered in the eastern corner, near the window.

Lucas spun and shot a jagged stream of magic to the window. The frame burst out and some of the bricks chipped as well.

Moira trembled at the force of Lucas’ magic swept over her, trying to seek Declan. But Lucas didn’t look up, and Moira kept still and held her shield in place.

Declan’s aura shifted through the air, to the other corner, while Lucas stalked to the window and peered around.

“Why are you here, Lucas?” Declan asked calmly.

“Read my mind, you lying bastard. Find out.”

Moira’s body began to shake against her will. The shield fidgeted in front of her. Her hair began to fall forward. It was rage, she realized. No one called her friend a liar.

One of the dead men lifted his chin. Moira tried to stifle her emotions.

“Lucas, this is not necessary,” Declan’s voice softened. “I don’t know what he told you I did, but you know me. Please. If you let us go, we can promise you protection.”


Lucas sent out another ring of magic, but Moira resisted its touch, and Declan stayed invisible.
“So you’re with Alexander,” Declan stated.

Who is Alexander? Moira wondered.

“Alexander is insane,” Lucas shivered and opened his eyes. “But he’s got an army, thanks to Markus. He’s got hundreds of those,” Lucas pointed to the still dead men. “What have you got, huh?”

Declan said nothing, and then without warning his aura disappeared entirely. Moira gasped. Had he left the room? She shifted a little, trying to sense if his aura had moved too far—

Then the whole room was bathed in blue magic, as shocking as raw sunlight. It burned Moira’s nostrils, almost seared against her skin, and she wanted to close her eyes but couldn’t move.

The dead men reacted first. One wind milled his arms and blindly punched his partner who flew back and smashed through the wall and out into the street below. Before the dead man could move again, the iron bed lifted off the ground and twisted, metal groaning as the frame became fluid like a snake, then the frame wrapped around the remaining dead man and he might have yelled only he had no voice so it was a horrible gasping sound, and the frame wrenched, and the man was in pieces.

The light then became so bright that Moira did close her eyes. When Moira reopened them, everything had changed.

Lucas was plastered to the wall. His chest rose and fell, his face was wet with sweat, and his magic coiled tight around his hands. The dead men were gone leaving only scorch marks behind. The room was righted as well, with even the wall back in place.

Moira scanned the room in time to see Declan’s magic weakly draw together and her friend appeared in the center of the room, collapsed on his hands and knees. He was making a horrible hacking sound. Then Moira realized he was laughing.

Lucas stared. “What the hell was that?”

Moira was thinking the same. Declan shook his hair back. He grinned.

“What was that,” Declan said. “About not being scared of us?”

Then his arms buckled under him and he went limp.

The shield vanished. Moira fell from the ceiling, trying to minimize her flailing as she did. She landed in front of Declan.

Lucas’ eyes hardened. He stepped forward. “You—“

Moira didn’t hesitate. With a flick of her wrist and nothing more she forced the young man flying back into the wall. She sent ropes of magic out next, lassoing his body to the wall. He went to retaliate but she gloved his hands with her magic, stifling both his power and movement. Lucas struggled. It was useless. As he went still, his pale, shining eyes latched onto Moira’s.

Moira’s head pounded. Her extended hand shook as her magic strained at her tethers, and she had to honestly fight not to crush Lucas’ body, or burn him to cinders. Still she couldn’t stop her magic from flaring half-loose around her body, probably making her look like she was on fire.

“How did you find us?” Moira asked. “Better, why did you find us?”

Lucas watched her carefully and said nothing.
Moira considered heating up her magic, trying to get more information, but instead she watched his aura, looking for the flares of green for dishonesty or lies. She saw none. His fear and loathing, though, washed over her, and her eyes watered against her will. Dammit, she didn’t want people to be afraid of her, she never...

“You will let us leave,” Moira said. “And you won’t follow us.”

“Or what?” Lucas said. “You’ll kill me too?”

“Too?” Moira said. Shock made her louder. “Oh that’s rich coming from a bloody Falcon!”

Lucas’ expression hardened. “We don’t kill the innocent.”

“And you think I do?” Moira said. Lucas jutted his chin, slanting his gaze down on her.

“Of course you do,” he said. “Spirit whore.”

It was his look of disgust, of fear and loathing intertwined, which shook her. It was the look scared children gave her as she passed. It was the look the Auror gave her when he slammed her head on the table. It was the look the president had as she put her wand to Moira’s face.

Yet, for the first time, Moira did not feel fear or pain seeing that look. Instead, just as she did with the President, she leaned forward, held Lucas’ gaze, and let him see her.

“I’m not a Spirit Whore,” Moira said. “I have a name, and a life, and a purpose. I’m not ruining any of those by killing you or accepting blame for something I never did or wanted.”

Moira stepped back. She turned and approached Declan. He was still on the floor, but when she crouched down he turned his head and regarded her.

“ Took you long enough,” he said.

“Well, I thought you enjoyed the chatting.” Moira reached out to haul Declan up but he waved her off, pushing himself up on his own accord.

“And by the way,” Moira said. “What the hell kind of display was that before?”

“Were you impressed?”

Moira rolled her eyes. “We need to leave. If this place is blown—“

“That won’t be easy.”

The two stopped and turned. Lucas was still stuck to the wall with Moira’s magic, but some color was returning to his face. He seemed softened somehow. Deflated. He nodded to the window.

“Look out there. You’ll see.”

Moira approached the window and reached out till she felt an invisible barrier. A tap of her hand broke it, and then smoke billowed inside, along with screams, and heat, and any semblance of order vanished from Moira’s mind as waves of suffering, of pain and fear, throttled her senses.

She was reduced to staring. She saw from the building across the way—it was more men in hoods, and they were dragging a family out into the streets, and the father was wearing a dressing gown and screaming and shouting and the kids were too limp—the dead men tossed their bodies like old newspapers—and the mother leapt at one of the dead men but then there was a snapping sound...
Moira looked away, but then she only saw more dead bodies in the streets. More smoke pouring from broken windows. More people screaming and crying out of sight. More men in dark hoods walked as if half awake through the wreckage, killing anyone who ventured too close.

It was day, Moira thought blankly. A nightmare in the daytime.

And above that, above all that, was a spirit...storm. Though the sky was blue and the sun shone clear the sky was covered with a white, almost shimmering and swirling miasma. Moira could hear the spirits within screaming, their pleas to move on denied, and then a few of the spirits left the storm above and hurtled down to the streets like meteors, dashing through walls and digging into streets. One flew past the window, inches from her face, and Moira flinched back.

She drew up against Declan’s chest. The hand he braced on her shoulder seemed more for his own benefit then hers.

“Gods,” Declan said. Then, “What is Markus thinking?”

“It’s war,” Lucas said without enthusiasm.

Declan turned his head. “Alexander has taken control, then.”

“Someone is using the Seals,” Moira whispered. “I can feel it. It’s sustaining the dead men, maybe. We have to find Markus. We need him to—”

“I told you,” Lucas said. “Markus is nothing now. He’s just...a puppet. Alexander’s puppet. Good as dead.”

Moira felt as if a dragon had just smoked her. “Who is Alexander?!”

Neither of the guys answered. There was a flare of green light in the street below, and the father stopped screaming.

Declan spoke first.

“Alexander is...well. You’ve met him.”

"That doesn't-" Then Moira’s heart dropped, and then her body went electric with rage. "You can't mean-the blonde psycho? The one that tried to kill you?"

"That one," Declan said at the same time Lucas said, "he tried to kill Declan?"

Declan shook his head. "But that doesn't matter. We have to stop him. Wherever he is, we just stop him, and this ends.” Declan paused. “We’ll probably die.”

Moira turned, about to tell him that it wouldn't be that simple, that they still had the Seals, and they were probably going to be arrested before they were killed...but his expression stopped her. She expected his usual vivid hope. His smile. Instead his expression was blank, and when she looked at him his throat suddenly bobbed and he turned his eyes down the floor, taking in a shaking breath.

“Oh no,” Moira said, feeling faint. “If you start crying, I swear I’ll start crying, and we do not have time...”

“I’m not crying.” Declan lifted his head and she saw fear and pain and hope war in his eyes, and suddenly she felt like her heart had fallen out of her chest and landed around his feet.

His lifted his hands. His fingertips brushed her cheek.
“Together,” Declan said. “We can stop this.”

“Alright,” Moira said.

“But promise me you’ll stay alive anyway.”

“I don’t have to promise what I’ll obviously—“

“No.”


Declan leaned forward and pressed his forehead against hers, surprising Moira, but she didn’t move away.

“I promise,” Declan said. Moira’s heart thudded in her chest.

Neither moved for a long moment.

“Uh, you guys,” Lucas said. “Still pinned to the wall here.”

“Great point.” Declan turned. “So. Where is dear mad Alexander off to, then?”

Tina burst through MACUSA’s front doors. She heard Newt catch the door behind her and pass through. She glanced back. Newt was still straightening his tie, and his hair was completely incorrigible, but none of that was important.

The central lobby was empty. The floor was fissured with cracks like an earthquake had struck. One of the railings on the stairs was bent completely out of shape, half hanging down into the lobby like a broken wing. The stairs were scorched with missed curses and burns.

Even the crisis dial was marred. Its glass was shattered and the hands spun maniacally around and around, the frantic ticking sound loud in the otherwise empty, silent space.

Tina slid to a stop. She felt her blood go cold. Beside her, Newt said,

“We’re too late.”

“We can’t be,” Tina whispered.

There was an explosion above. Both looked up to see a cloud of darkness appear in the open air between the floors, shrouding out the sunlight for just a moment but illuminated with cracks of green magic. Tina heard someone shout then another sound like a thunder clap. Something punctured the darkness, something that was falling—

Newt grabbed Tina and hauled her back just as massive pieces of stone rubble slammed into the ground. The force of it threw Tina to her knees. Dust clouded the air for just a second but she grappled for Newt’s hand and then hauled him towards the elevators, using the smoke for cover until they reached the elevator shaft—but the elevator was lopsided in its frame. There was blood splattered on the floor, across the buttons.

Tina swallowed but didn’t let panic seize her as she kept pulling Newt towards the stairs.

“It was the tenth floor,” Newt breathed. “I counted.”
They flew up the stairs, and Tina tried to organize the little data they had.

That morning, they had received a Patronus from the President ordering both of them to come in.

Before they had gotten out the door, there was another Patronus, telling them that the fourth ward had revolted—Tina remembered that word, the war images it had brought up—and that the two would report to MACUSA before being sent into the field to contain the crisis.

But when they stepped out of their apartment, Tina had heard the shrieking, the sound unnatural that she’d only heard once before, and she knew there was no containing the spirits that were teeming invisibly over head. No Maj’s had stayed inside, smartly, and the few wizards out on the streets had grabbed Tina—recognizing she was an Auror, maybe—for answers but she and Newt had swiftly Apparated.

They reached the tenth floor. Tina paused at the door and looked at Newt.

Newt had his wand drawn. His back was to the stone next to the door, and his body was alert. He looked very unlike himself.

“I’ll cover you,” he said.

Tina, despite everything, gave him a small smile. There was no one else she’d want at her side right now. Tina took a deep breath, tightened the hold on her wand, and pushed the door open.

No one blasted them as they exited. The hall was surprisingly clean and quiet. It made Tina suspicious. She nodded to Newt and signaled him to follow. They snuck down the hall, listening, but soon came to where the fight had been. It was the gallery open to the lobby below. It looked like some great monster had taken a bite out of it, leaving only a jagged sliver of stone for Newt and Tina to slide across over a ten-story drop.

“Who?” Newt wondered, staring at the wreckage.

They moved across. If Tina remembered correctly this area of the building was used for trials or for conferences. The rooms would be high ceileding, steeped, usually with two or three doors leading into the space. They both made it to a more solid hall, and followed the burns and chips in the walls. They had made it to a wide hallway full of doors when one of the doors a few feet from them burst out of its frame and slammed into the wall, propelled by a shot of green magic. Tina and Newt drew back but no one exited. The door frame was filled with smoke.

Tina stepped closer, her heart pounding, but her wand level. She heard Newt mutter something before he followed. They reached the empty door frame. Through the smoke she saw flashes of magic but heard no words. There kept being explosions, then massive tremors, like a giant was stomping around.

But it was a court room, she knew. That meant there would be a secondary entrance...Tina grabbed Newt and pulled him past the doorway quickly, then continued on, ignoring his confused sounds as she pulled him through an innocous door into a small, dark room.

They paused there, breathing loudly in the space. Tina could hear the fighting through the wall now.

“What is it?” Newt said.

“I just wanted to say something,” Tina said.

“Wait a moment,” Newt said, then he cast a *Lumos* charm, and his wand lit between them. Tina
jolted at how close he was. He was waiting expectantly, his hazel eyes glowing in the light. "What is it, Tina?"

Tina’s mouth went dry.

“Yes?” Newt said.

“Newt,” Tina said. “I just...thank you.”

“What do you mean?” Newt blinked, his eyes darting behind her and then back to her eyes. “We haven’t even gone in yet, and we could both not make it back out, or I might not at least—“

“Don’t say that!” Tina cried, shocking herself. They grew quiet, save for the muffled explosions next to them. Newt gazed at her thoughtfully. Then he was kissing her, and Tina almost started crying which she knew was silly since she had a battle to fight, but she kissed him back as much as she could because he was right, they might not make it out, and even if they did something could still go wrong...but she’d deal with that then. Tina drew back. She still clung for a moment, savoring his nearness. He kissed her forehead and let go.

“Right,” Tina said.

“Very right,” Newt replied.

Tina almost smiled as she turned. She nudged Newt back a little, then flung a jinx at the wall and the wall burst open, letting smoke and light pour in, and she heard someone shout in surprise but then Tina was running forward, glad and terrified that Newt was behind her, straight into battle.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone! Hope you all enjoyed your new year :) As you can probably tell a lot of action is coming up so do stay tuned and I hope you enjoy!
thanks for the reads,
~lize
Tina hadn’t expected the dark. After all, the room they entered had floor to ceiling windows in one wall, and the ceilings stretched ten stories high. But the windows were blackened out and rattling as if a storm raged outside. The balconies and stone galleries that used to line the walls now lay shattered and broken on the floor, leaving jagged ledges jutting above.

The rubble provided cover. Tina moved to the nearest shield of stone. From the otherside Tina saw magic flash, booms and crashes from repelled spells flying into the surrounding walls. The speed of the exchange was incredible, like watching a thunder storm up close.

Newt came up alongside Tina. She nodded to the otherside of the stone barrier and Newt followed her lead, so the two separated as they wove through the debris.

There was a cry. A louder crash of magic, and some more stone rained down from above. Tina braced herself, ducking to the ground, and was suddenly presented with something like a hole in another stone piece, a window to what was the dueling floor.

It was the president, Tina knew, but she was still shocked at the woman’s appearance. Her turban was immaculate, as usual, but dirt covered her skin, and rips and tears marred her elegant robes like she’d been rolling around the floor or running through a briar patch.

Across from her was a young man that Tina recognized from files. He wasn’t particularly large or intimidating, but right now magic seethed like a living thing around his body, and his eyes glowed with something like madness and yet was cold and severe. His fingertips sparked.

“There is a point to all this,” Markus said. “In case you were wondering.”

Picquery whipped her wand over her head. A few boulders worth of debris launched at Markus like asteroids. The young man simply smashed his empty hands together in front of his chest, and each of the boulders split in half like rotten fruit. Picquery paused, considering him. Markus wiped his mouth.

“I can tell you anyway,” he said.

“No need,” Picquery said. “You all say the same things.”

Markus used his whole body to cast what Tina guessed was some kind of curse because he twisted his spine, side flipped, and landed on one foot before kicking out and flinging both arms—it should have looked ridiculous—but then a massive snake flew from his hands. The snake was not corporeal. It was made of green and white fire. It flew at the president and had her surrounded in a breath, seething all around her in a powerful coil. It batted stones the size of small cars away with its tail.

Picquery kept very still. The snake’s head swayed over her while its eyes glowed like rubies. Little licks of flame dripped from its lengthy fangs.

Markus was breathing hard. He was sweating. But he remained upright, and began to circle the president.

“Everything started with some immigrants,” Markus said. “As most things in America do.”
Tina caught sight of movement in the corner of her vision. She moved a little, and saw a flash of blue coat as Newt darted to the nearest still-standing column, a little closer to Markus. Tina ignored her relief and focused on the president. Picquery wasn’t struggling, and she said nothing.

“A No Maj and a wizard fall in love,” Markus said. “But Rappaport’s invalidates it. So obviously there’s a fundamental difference between the two beings, and a danger in their relation.”

“Any schoolboy knows—“

“It all makes sense, you know, till you get actual individuals involved. Like my parents, who came here for a better life, only to be excluded from American society because they were wrong somehow.”

The eyes on the snake flared. A tongue of green flame lolled from its jaws.

Picquery’s expression didn’t crack.

“Rappaport’s law is more than that. It’s greater then any of us. It’s rooted in the Statute of Secrecy which all the wizarding world shares.”

“Sure,” Markus’s eyes glittered. “America is just special ’cause we really don’t like No Maj’s. We can’t marry, aren’t expected to be friends with them, even talk to them, that sort of thing. All we need is wizards. They’re the safe ones.”

Picquery tried to move. Markus just twitched one finger. The snake darted down at her and its fangs grazed the side of her face. The president gasped and pitched forward as a wound opened across her cheekbone. She couldn’t move her arms to stop the blood.

Tina moved from the boulder to the next. Her shoes slid on some loose stones, but neither Markus nor the president turned. Tina looked around for Newt.

“It’s dangerous,” Picquery reasoned. “No Maj’s have attacked us before out of fear. You weren’t here to know what that was like. And what you’ve done can only make that worse.”

“But if they were both killed, the wizard and the No Maj,” Markus said. “Is there any difference then? Then they’re just corpses. Buried the same way. Burned the same way.”

Tina’s heart was pounding. Suddenly, she thought of Queenie. She hadn’t seen her in so long. She’d been in such rush, and they’d been so angry at each other...

“Rappaport’s Law protects all,” the president said quietly. “It protects us from No Maj fear, and No Maj’s from people like you. Without it there would be chaos.”

Markus tilted his head. Tina expected a smile, a laugh, a declaration of humorous individuality that would go with this freak show.

Instead, Markus shook his head. “You’re lying, Madame President. It’s not good.”

“We’re protecting—“

“Who? Not the No Maj’s. If you care so much about them, you wouldn’t make us treat them like they’re some clueless, dangerous animals. If you cared about them, you would’ve gotten involved when I killed the first one, not the fiftieth. But wait, that’s right,” Markus shrugged. “None of that mattered until one witch got involved, and other wizards were threatened.”
Tina was almost directly behind the president now. She drew her wand, but stayed low, out of sight of Markus though she could see him. She would have to move quickly, decisively.

“So you admit to this,” Picquery said. “Admit that you killed so many, and exposed us all, to protect No Maj’s?”

“I had to.” Markus did smile then. It was almost apologetic. “Without power, no one cares about you, and damn well no one listens. But I’m not an idiot, or insane. I used your power to do it.”

For the first time, Picquery looked unsettled, even confused. Markus tilted his head, mirroring the snake.

“So, in a way,” Markus said. “You’re really as responsible for all this I am.”

It was then Tina spotted Newt. Or rather, she caught his eyes, and his wand, both pointed at Markus’ back. Her breath caught as their eyes met. Newt was hesitating.

Markus drew closer, placing his face close to one of the strongest witches in the world.

“Want to know my price?” Markus said. “If you pay it, I’ll break my own Seals. Then, no one else has to die. I wouldn’t mind that.” All light left his eyes. “I’d like to be done with killing.”

Picquery just glared. Newt’s wand lowered, just a breath, but Tina met his eyes and nodded and raised her own. It was then Markus spoke again.

“What you all must do is repeal Rappaport’s law and break the Statute of Secrecy.” Then, Markus's eyes went straight into Tina’s. “Or I kill Queenie Goldstein next.”

Moira presumed sewers were nasty, dank, and dark. Nothing had proven her wrong so far.

“Remind me again why we’re going to MACUSA?” Lucas said.

Their group were surrounded by three orbs of light, with each wizard generating an orb in their magic’s color. Declan’s was green-blue. Moira’s was rose gold. Moira was surprised to see Lucas’ was a pleasant violet color.

“Because that's where Markus is.” Declan replied.

“You only believe that 'cause her bird thing coughed up some hair.”

Kai gave an indignant squawk, but didn’t leave Moira’s shoulder. Moira rubbed the top of his head, only half focused. Most of her energy—her magic, really, though it was ricoeying around inside her like bolts of lightning trying to escape—was dedicated to maintaining her shields. The last thing she needed was a spirit dipping into the sewers and possessing her. And if it kept the rats away as well, then great.

“Kai coughed up Markus’s hair. Moira saw Kai come from MACUSA,” Declan said. “Ergo, Markus is there.”

“From the direction of MACUSA.” Lucas corrected.

“Where all the spirits were circling.”

“That’s according to the Spirit Wh—“
Lucas cut himself off but Declan still stopped and turned. The blue light cast ghostly shadows over his hollow cheeks, put cold lights in his large eyes.

“What was that, Lucas?” he asked calmly.

Lucas looked away. “Sorry, Gerald. Hard to change habits right off.”

Declan seemed to ponder Lucas’ words, but was probably reading his thoughts anyway. After a moment he nodded, then glanced at Moira with a small smirk. But Moira didn’t really care if Declan scared Lucas. She cared about what she had seen almost an hour ago, that being all the loose, raging spirits in the city suddenly gathering and circling around one tall, elegant building. Why all the spirits wanted to get into MACUSA, she didn’t want to think about. But she had to find out. If what she thought was right...

The three continued on. The path pitched lower, and the air grew more sour and unused. The throbbing in Moira’s head strengthened. Kai began to purr and nudge her chin with the top of his head.

“Moira, you okay?” Declan asked, his voice softened.

“Mm.” Moira replied. “How long?”

“Not very.” Declan hedged.

Occasionally, the roof shook above. Dust rained down. Moira tried to not think of being buried alive.

“I just don’t get it,” Lucas said. “I mean, wouldn’t they notice? The Goldbloods, I mean. Wouldn’t they notice all the spirits fighting the building?”

“Doesn’t matter,” Moira said. “It’s there now. But it’s...” As they drew closer, Moira was beginning to feel tremors in the air. Faint whispers of moans. Suddenly, she stopped, and guided her magic to illuminate the water running beside them.

Only, it wasn’t water. It was black pitch. It oozed.

Lucas whistled. Declan gaped.

“I was right,” Moira whispered. She turned her hand, extending her light, to see the ooze thickening ahead of them, and more seeping down the walls. “I was right.”

There was footsteps. Instantly the three doused their lights, but it was difficult to tell where the sounds came from in the echoing tunnels. Moira drew closer to the wall, shielding herself for invisibility. A hand took her’s in the dark, Declan’s familiar scars rubbing into her palm, and the invisible shield doubled in strength.

The light came next. Then around the blind corner to their right, where the ooze was thickest, something glowed bright orange. Voices followed. One sharp, powerful, and the other a cold whisper.

“The president is being handled upstairs,” the louder voice said. “I told you that already. Markus handles it, gives me the signal, then we complete the spell.”

Declan squeezed Moira’s hand. She glanced back. He mouthed, Alexander. Moira nodded.

“Markus is a child against a genius,” the quieter voice said. “She’ll destroy him.”
“Well sure,” Alexander probably shrugged.

“And Scamander?”

“Not a problem,” Alexander said. “Once Goldstein finds her sister dead, he’ll be nothing but—”

Then there was a sudden burst of magic. It shook the floor. The orange light brightened then dimmed, like a fire sputtering, and when the magic settled the voices had vanished.

The three kept close together as they crept forward. Kai vibrated with tension on Moira’s shoulder. Moira had one hand inside her coat, ready to draw at a blink. Dust floated past them. They hovered at the corner, waiting, but heard nothing. It was Moira who glanced around first, with Declan just behind her.

Before them rose a newly blasted hole in the stone. The source of the burst of magic, maybe. The black liquid seeped into the opening eagerly, like water to a starving plant, but beyond that Moira couldn’t tell because a sheet of pulsing orange light covered the opening like a curtain. A barrier. One that would be very noticeable if it was taken down.

“We’re right under MACUSA,” Lucas whispered. “They must have gone into some kind of sub-level.”

“But it’s blocked,” Declan said.

“With good reason,” Moira whispered.

“What d’ya mean?”

Moira could hardly speak. The barrier wasn’t enough to block out the sounds of the spirits crying. The throbbing in her head reached a shrieking point and she braced herself against the wall.

"Moira?" Declan said.

“It’s a Seal,” Moira said. “MACUSA. It’s built over one giant Seal. And someone is trying to wake it up.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone, sorry for the hiatus. I had some things personal going on. BUT that also means I have the rest written out (YEA) and just need to edit them for your viewing pleasure.

thanks for the reads,
~lize
Chapter Summary

In which the morals of many are questioned again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The boys didn’t say anything to Moira for a moment. Then, Declan’s threw his hands into his hair and said, “Of course! It all makes sense! The dragons, the warehouse, the attacks, burning your home, it all makes sense!”

“Really?” Moira and Lucas said.

“Nope.” Declan grinned. “Then again, Markus has gone insane.”

Moira rolled her eyes and looked around the corner again. Her eyes narrowed on the barrier, and then out of curiosity she shifted to her aura vision.

The barrier looked the same only the texture was different. She could see through it like a chain link fence, see how the spell had been woven in and around itself to form a wall.

That also meant she saw the weak spots in the link. If she had a wand, she could have broken it. Her knives would probably do as well. But considering there were two others in there, and the Seal would kill all of them...

Something about the Seal was different too. She couldn’t really describe it. The Seal was ancient, for one, older than any she’d encountered, and massive. Someone was using the power in it, but not all of it. Not hardly. The spirits inside were mottled, damaged, held captured for too long, and despite the barrier she could feel their fear and anger like a cold wind. Who knew when it was created...which meant, Moira realized, no one here could do a Rescindation. The creator was probably long dead.

A hand closed over her elbow and Moira jumped.

“Hey,” Declan said. His smile was tight. “You were muttering and your eyes looked weird.”

Moira shook her head and took a step back from the Seal. “It’s the Seal. There’s something wrong with it. It’s like it’s broken, or missing something.”

The two boys exchanged a look, then turned to her with expectation.

“Well I don’t know what it needs,” Moira hissed. “It’s not like it’s whispering ‘Moira, add a bit more blood and death, that’s a girl’.”

“Shh!” Lucas waved them back. They followed without question as the barrier rippled, then split open and Alexander stepped through. He looked back over his shoulder, saying something maybe. Moira glanced into the opening quickly. She saw the black ooze covering the walls. Someone in a dark cloak kneeled on the floor with his head lowered. Behind him were two half-shrouded bodies.
Moira saw a flash of blonde hair, and a pink coat, then the barrier closed again.

Declan’s grip tightened and Moira realized that Alexander had faced forward again. He lingered until the barrier closed back up. Moira held her breath, keeping still. Though she was invisible, her body still half-stuck out into the hall of stone.

Suddenly, Alexander’s head snapped to the side, towards them, and his nostrils flared like a dog with a scent, and his eyes had a red sheen.

Moira felt cold looking at him. Something was missing from his flat eyes, from his smile as he continued to stare towards them. His aura was...she blinked. His aura wasn’t complete anymore, just sickly whisps of red and black. He was fractured inside.

And suddenly Moira saw Ferdi dead on the ground, and she saw Declan looking at her just before her home burst into flames, and then she saw the blonde man, Alexander in disguise, throwing her into a Seal, wanting her to die...

Both Declan’s hands closed around her arms and hauled Moira back and against him, trapping her in place. Kai hissed and took to the air silently, vanishing into the gloom.

Alexander turned away from them, shaking his head, muttering to himself, and then he drew a pendant out from under his shirt. Moira recognized the three-part symbol from the building.

Grindelwald. Well, that explained the insanity.

Alexander touched the symbol to his mouth. He glanced back at the barrier, bowed his head, before vanishing with a loud cracking sound.

The three wizards and Kai kept still. Moira felt Declan’s sharp breaths behind her. The ropes of muscles on his arm stood up. Moira turned her head and met his gaze. After a second he let her go.

“So,” Declan said.

“Yeah,” Moira said.

Declan tried a smile and failed.

“Now what?” Lucas’s eyes flashed between the other two. “We can’t possibly take them on. I don’t know about hood, but he gives me a bad feeling.”

“They said the president was here,” Moira murmured.

“The president?” Lucas said. “As in, of MACUSA? Our president?”

Declan ran his hands over his mouth, and he nodded.

“So we’ll get her.”

“Get her?” Lucas and Moira repeated.

Declan nodded. He looked up, as if seeing through concrete and dirt to the floors above. “She’s the most powerful witch in the world. She could break through the barrier, take on hood man probably, easy. We handle Markus, and Alexander—“

“And we’ll have Newt and Tina,” Moira’s heart began to race, but for once not with fear. “With them, we could...stop them all.”
“They’ll give us a damn medal for sure,” Declan smiled back.

Lucas looked between them. “You’re both mad.” Then he sighed. “I’ll stand guard down here. You go get them.”

Tina’s body felt rooted to the ground. There was no point in hiding from Markus anymore so she moved from behind the column. She didn’t know if she should lower her wand or not, which spell to use if she could. Just the mention of her sister’s name made half her training vanish. Besides, what would she say to disarm him? Could she?

Markus rose to a standing as well, smiling at her. The president sighed and said,

“You should’ve disarmed him when you had a chance, Goldstein.”

“You can destroy the Seals?” Tina said.

Markus walked around the president like she was nothing more than furniture and stopped in front of Tina.

Tina kept her wand raised. “Where is my sister?”

Markus glanced from the wand to her, amused.

“Where?” Tina demanded.

“Can’t say,” Markus said. “Not till you repeal the law, of course.”

Tina took a step forward. Markus noticed the move, his eyes narrowing with calculation.

“Tell me,” Tina said quietly. “Or I’ll make you.”

Markus stepped forward, putting Tina’s wand straight to his head.

“Try it, then,” he said. “And the Seal will take your sister’s soul first.”

Tina didn’t hear it as she loosed the first spell she could think of. It was a blur, and Markus’s skin appeared to ripple with green light and then the spell rebounded and crashed into Tina, throwing her back and into a piece of stone. Her head and spine screamed in pain and Tina collapsed.

“Weak,” Markus shook his head. “Disappointing.”

“Markus!”

It was a new voice. Not Newt’s. Tina tried to raise her head to see the speaker. She did see Markus’s feet as he spun, then stumbled back a little.

“Alexander,” he said. “You’re early.”

“You’re late,” Alexander, whoever that was, replied.

Tina’s eyes strained upwards, but her vision rippled. Her hair felt wet. When she touched her forehead, her fingertips came back red. When she sensed someone coming at her from behind, she tried to turn—nausea swamped her—but then she recognized Newt’s gentle hands as he drew her back, away from the scene.
Now she saw Alexander standing toe to toe with Markus, with Markus between him and the president.

“Kill her,” Alexander said.

“She hasn’t repealed the law yet,” Markus said, sounding almost petulant. Alexander rolled his eyes.

“It doesn’t matter,” Alexander gestured out, around. “We have the Seal. Kill her, and you can do whatever you want.”

“Without laws it’ll mean nothing,” Markus persisted. “All this killing will mean nothing. We have to change how our world—“

Without warning Alexander backhanded Markus. The young man fell to the ground far harder than he should have, hitting a boulder as he did.

“Shut up,” Alexander said coldly. “I’m tired of your moralizing.”

“That makes two of us,” the president replied. Alexander turned his icy smile to the president and reached into his coat. He drew out a pendant.

Tina made a small sound. Newt shushed her, but it was too late. Alexander focused on the two of them next. The smile spread wider and then narrowed, and Tina felt Newt’s arm tighten around her.

“Well,” Alexander said. “You all are right where you should be, for once.”

“What do you want?” Newt asked, his voice rattling a little.

“Want?” Alexander blinked. “Oh, you mean my motivation. Well, you see, unlike Mr. Chatterbox over here—” he kicked Markus in the back, and the boy on the ground didn’t respond. “—I know how to keep my motivations to myself. So let’s just take care of you,” Alexander reached down and picked something off the ground. It was a wand. No, it was the president’s wand. Alexander raised it. “And then we can all go home, right?”

“Newt,” Tina whispered, trying to struggle away so he could defend himself. But Newt wouldn’t let her go. He began to whisper to himself, though, but Tina couldn’t understand him.

“Any dying words?” Alexander said.

“We’re not dying yet,” Newt said.

Alexander laughed. “Good ones.”

“Not for you,” Newt said. He whistled four times, sharp, piercing, and then without warning the door burst open and Kai flew in. In a screeching azure blur he launched himself at Alexander.

Alexander screamed and spun, batting at the creature. Tina’s head reeled trying to follow him but all she saw was blood spurting from Alexander’s face, heard his screaming pitch high and then suddenly cut out with a gurgle.

The snake around the president vanished, and the woman collapsed on the ground, gasping. Tina didn’t see where Kai went and didn’t care.

Newt helped Tina to sit up against a rock. He moved to crouch in front of her. He held her face gently between his hands and tilted her side to side, his worried hazel eyes daring this way and that.

Kai landed next to Newt. The creature butted its head against his leg.

“Your pupils look wrong,” Newt said to Tina. He reached for his wand. “I can fix it—"

“Hands off,” Tina mumbled. “Magic too. I’m fine, just help me...”

“Tina, dear, you could have a severe concussion, or spine injury. It would be best if you just...”

Tina saw the flare of green just in time. She grabbed Newt and pitched him to the side. Kai, still lying down, hissed and flew back, claws out to attack but Newt fell over him.

It was Markus. The young man had risen. Blood coated his cheek, matted his hair, and one eye was half swollen shut. His gaze landed on Alexander, who lay on his back on the ground. Tina finally saw what Kai had done.

Kai had clawed out Alexander’s eyes.

Markus stumbled back. His mouth open and shut. Then, his eyes lifted to Tina, and he said, “What did you do?”

“What?” Tina said. Newt shifted behind her.

“What did you do to him? You took his eyes?” Markus’s eyes brightened with something like tears. “What kind of monster does that? What was he to you? Did you even think him human?”

The ground trembled under their feet. The windows' rattling became so loud that Tina almost screamed in surprise.

“Why?” Markus shouted. “Why do you get to decide who lives or dies?”

“Markus,” Tina licked her lips, stepping forward slowly. “Listen, please, we didn’t kill him. It was—"

“Your friend tried to kill you!” the president said. “Don’t you remember that?”

Markus spun on the president and shoved both his hands forward. The president, unprepared, flew back and pitched straight up to the stone balcony and out of sight.

Tina heard Newt scramble behind her. She wanted to turn and ask what the hell he was doing, but looking away from Markus would be like looking away from a wolf. With a blank shock she wondered if the young man could possibly break into an Obscurus, or...


Markus seemed to freeze.

“Your sister,” Markus repeated. He blinked rapidly.

“My sister Queenie,” she said. “Why her? What did she do to you?”

When Markus just stared at her, Tina pressed forward. “She likes pink, and cooking, and she can read minds. When she was four she broke her arm because she tried to ride my dad’s broomstick. She’s my family. She’s all I have.” Tina swallowed hard. “Please, Markus. Where is my sister?”

Markus stepped back, but his mouth tightened and he lifted his hand. Magic gathered.
“I’m sorry,” Markus said. “But in war, no one is safe.”

Tina steeled herself, and she prepared to cast a shield charm, when from seemingly no where a figure fell straight from the ceiling and landed right on top of Markus.

Or tried to. Markus rolled to one side at the last minute, leaving the faller to sort of bounce off the floor and skid to the side.

Tina blinked.

“Hey there friend,” Declan said to Markus. “What’cha up to?”

Markus remained crouched, snarling, then he bolted at Declan. Declan did not flinch or move besides grinning wider.

From behind Markus came a streak of golden light. It hit him and threw him up against a wall. The magic shifted to wrap around Markus’s ankles and wrists, while one barb hovered just in front of the young man’s forehead. Tina expected it to be the president's magic. It wasn’t. Moira strode into the room with one hand raised. Magic swirled around her as well in a rosy shimmering cloud. Her eyes were the same color. It gave Tina goosebumps every time.

Declan said, “Keep him there, okay?”

“Yes,” Moira said. “The president went up to the balconey. I saw.”

Declan grabbed the President’s wand away from Alexander’s body. He hesitated staring at Alexander's clawed face, then shivered and turned away. He bounded into the air, rapelled off a broken column, and disappeared into the balconey.

Moira approached. The young witch glanced between Tina and Newt and the lines in her forehead creased. “Hey. Are you okay?”

Tina couldn’t respond. She could only hear Markus’s words over and over.

_No one is safe. No one is safe._

“You can probably put your hands down,” Moira said, a bit quieter now. “No one’s attacking you, Tina.”

Tina felt her arms float down like they were separate from her body. Moira shook her head at Tina and then went behind her. “Hey, Mr. Scamander. Hey.”

Above, Declan appeared with the president in tow. The two glided down to ground level. They appeared to be arguing. Markus, still on the wall, was struggling to escape.

“Queenie,” Tina whispered. She looked at Markus. “He has her.”

“I know,” Moira said. Then she half-shouted, “Hey, Mr. Scamander!”

Tina turned. Newt was on the ground, propped up against the piece of rubble still red with Tina's blood. He cradled his hand to his chest. He was sweating, and his breath was labored. His eyes were closed.

Tina’s senses bounded to life in a flash. She could smell the crackle of magic and feel the dust settling against her skin. The shrieking outside faded, though, as she crouched besides Newt.
“What’s wrong with him?” Moira said.

“I was about to ask you the same thing,” Tina replied. She leaned closer. “Newt? Can you hear me?”

Newt’s eyes fluttered. “Tina?”

Relief flattened Tina’s heart. She nodded. “Yeah, I’m here.”

Moira laid a hand over Newt’s chest. Magic seeped from her palm through his shirt, assumingly into his body. Newt gasped, not in pain, but like a swimmer from a dive, and Moira bit her lip.

“Infection,” she said. “Broken ribs, maybe a punctured lung…”

“How can you know?” Tina demanded.

“Leg’s broken too,” Moira continued, heedless, “Fixable things. But it’s his blood. Something is wrong there.”

“It’s poison,” Newt whispered.

“Poison?” Tina cried. “How could that have…”

There was a despondent squawk. Kai clammered over the boulder Newt rested against. He extended his long neck down and nudged Newt’s hair with his beak, which was crusted with blood.

With a short gasp Tina grabbed Newt’s injured hand, and despite Newt’s weak struggles to pull away she saw the two long scratches. The wounds were raised and blackened and seeped blood.

Moira went still, staring at the wounds.

“It was an accident,” Newt whispered. “Kai didn’t mean it, Moira, he was just…defending…”

“Stop talking,” Moira snapped. “And let go of that hand, Miss Goldstein, before it gets you too.”

Moira reached into her coat and pulled out a few vials, but most of them were shattered, their contents long gone. Moira swore.

Tina let go of Newt’s hand but took up the other. She laid her other hand against his cheek. He turned his face towards her.

Behind them, Declan’s voice raised against the president’s. It seemed far away to Tina though she knew it shouldn’t have. She lifted Newt’s hand to her mouth and kissed the knuckles. He tasted like stone dust.

“Tina?” Newt said.

“Still here.”

His gripped her hand. He opened his eyes again and smiled. “You know, before this, I was think—“ his words cut off as Moira bandaged his hand. Tina saw a flicker of magic in the cloth of the bandage, but Moira’s face was drawn.

“I meant,” Newt said. “That I was thinking.”

“A good sign,” Tina said. She looked at Moira. “Right? A good sign? He’s coherent.”

Moira finished wrapping the bandage. Without looking up she said, “You should go see the
president, Tina. About your sister.”

Tina almost agreed, but Newt’s shaking grew worse. His skin was losing color.

“Right?” Tina snapped at Moira. “He’s good, right?”

When Moira’s eyes lifted to Tina’s, they were full of tears. Tina’s heart stopped.


“No, no it’s not,” Tina stared at Moira. “Because she’s a Spirit Walker, so she can do anything, she can...”

“Tina.”

Tina gazed down at Newt. Newt smiled. “I know it’s a bit late for this.”

“For what?”

Moira rose and left Newt’s side.

“Hey!” Tina shouted. “Where are you going?”

Moira ignored Tina. Tina began to shake. Newt tugged on her hand and brought her attention back to him.

“Tina Goldstein,” Newt said. “Marry me.”

Tina stared. “Newt, you’re...you’re not in your right mind and you’re injured and—“

“Marry me.” His hand was almost a vise now, his eyes burning. “Please. Stay with me.”

“Moira!” Tina cried.

But Tina realized suddenly that she couldn’t see the girl, or anyone, because her vision was too blurred, and then Tina sobbed.

“Not the best response,” Newt said.

“No, I mean...”

Newt coughed. It rattled. Still he didn’t look away from her.

Tina lowered her head. She held his one hand in both of her’s.

“I’m not leaving,” Tina said. “I’m here. I’m here for you.”

Newt’s eyes drifted closed. His grip weakened. Emboldened, Tina leaned even closer, till they shared breath, as much as it was. “Newt, I’m here, and I’ll always be here.

“That’s...a yes?”

“Yes.” Tina sobbed. “Of course.”

Newt’s grip slackened. His breathing stopped.
Well that’s that then. See you next time, and thanks for the reads :)  
~lize.
There You Are

Chapter Notes

Deep breath.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Moira felt numb. She could hear Tina screaming and crying behind her. She could hear Kai’s horrible keening cry with it. She smelled blood. She smelled death.

And here was the president of MACUSA, telling Moira there was nothing she could do.

“It’s a Seal, and you knew it was here, and you pretended for so long,” Declan practically shouted. “And now we need you to break it and you’re saying you can’t because it’s too dangerous?”

“I’m saying you can break it without me.” Picquery was calm. “While I deal with Goldstein and Scamander, and my Aurors in the field.”

“Not much to deal with Scamander,” Moira mumbled, half-aware.

Declan’s hands fisted by his sides. His face began to flush. “You mean you won’t be associated with it. To protect yourself.”

“To protect the reputation of my office, yes.” The president’s eyes closed for a moment. “It’s not easy for me.”

“We don’t have time for this,” Moira whispered. She felt colder and colder. Her head was pounding. She still held the bandages in her hands from doing up Newt’s hand.

“You told me there was only one more wizard below,” the president said. “With Moira in the state she is, she could probably wipe out the entire city. One wizard won’t be a problem.”

“I can’t,” Moira said. “If I get close to the Seal it could suck me in and then we’ll really have problems.”

“Then take Goldstein with you.”

“Are you insane?” Declan said. “She’s not going anywhere right now.”

“It seems she’ll have to,” the president said.

Declan spun away in frustration, and the movement probably saved his life, because then a bit of the gallery above collapsed, sending marble plummeting to the ground. Moira shouted and rolled and then her concentration broke.

Markus yelled.

Moira spun to see Markus fall from the wall. He had some sort of long narrow blade in his hand. Moira drew one of her knives but then her hand stung like her blade had bitten her skin. Shocked, Moira stared at the knife, which was pulsing with white magic.
Then, she realized. Markus’s weapon was deflecting her’s. There was only one weapon that could do that. Family, after all, could not fight family. Family weapons couldn’t fight each other.

Markus had her brother’s sword.

A blur next. Moira saw Declan shout. She couldn’t hear because suddenly the windows above went silent and it felt like she had gone too fast under water. Markus pointed Liam’s weapon at her, almost in slow motion, and mouthed something, and green light shot at her, and Moira seemed to feel each individual heartbeat in her chest. She felt Declan’s arms close around her’s, knew she couldn’t move in time—and then there was a flash of indigo again. The awful magic ricocheted off Kai’s feathers in a brilliant burst, throwing Markus back.

Kai fell from the air.

The bonds around Moira's thoughts loosened and her mind went blank. Declan strode forward, drawing his own knife, and approached Markus to stand over him.

“Stay down,” Declan hissed. “Or I swear to god I'll kill you now.” Then he kicked Markus. “You dare use his weapon against his sister? What the hell is wrong with you?”

“She got Liam killed,” Markus hissed. His body twitched unnaturally. “She deserves everything.”

Moira drifted forward. Her hearing muffled a bit, though she could see Tina’s mouth moving as she half threw herself over Newt. Declan, she realized, was wrestling with Markus now, who must have recovered enough to do harm. Both of the boy’s bodies were cloaked in magic like armor, and they spun and rolled and sent debris falling left and right.

Picquery raised her wand at the two duelers. Moira sensed that the president would take out both if she could.

All this Moira knew, but couldn’t process.

She kept going forward, crawling, to touch Kai’s feather’s. They shimmered as they bent under her fingertips. She collected him into her arms. His long neck flopped, loose and unnatural, while his claws dragged over the floor. Moira felt her cheeks grow hot at the same time the rest of her went numb.

Something clicked off in Moira’s mind.

She’d kill him.

On the ground, Tina stared. She thought watching the president fight Markus was incredible but watching these two were something else. She could understand now why Picquery had struggled against Markus. The magic of the street kids didn’t move like it would have from wands. Instead, it seemed like a living thing, guided by the movement of the whole body, and Declan and Markus dove in and out of each other’s spaces and the blasts of magic with an almost inhuman dexterity. Sometimes their weapons would collide, sending colorful sparks flying and rushes of wind bursting out. Only, Declan didn't have a weapon. All of his skin glowed with markings and words that pulsed magic. He blocked Markus' sword with his bare arms and hands. They shouted at each other but she couldn’t understand what was said. She heard Moira’s name a few times.

Tina noticed all this, to stop from noticing Newt's heavy weight in her arms.
Then the tide changed. Declan changed it, but so fast, such a blur, that Tina wasn’t sure what he did, only that there was a massive pulse of blue magic that wrapped all around Markus’ body and in an almost elegant arch sent the young man flying up and into the wall.

The young man landed with a harsh thump.

Declan strode forward. He stopped over him, knife pointed down.

“Stand down,” he said quietly. There was no victory in his voice.

“They all deserve it,” Markus hissed. He was crying, though, his tears laced with green. “They killed everyone I loved. They did.”

“Not everyone,” Declan said. He crouched down and laid a hand over Markus’ eyes. “You did that yourself, friend.”

Markus went limp. His power disappeared from the air. Declan didn’t move for a moment, then lifted his hand. He regarded Markus with darkening eyes before picking the blade from Markus’ hands. He turned.

“Is he dead?”

“No,” Declan said. “I leave that kind of thing to you. But he won’t wake up till I tell him to. Old magic, you know. Literal in that way.”

Despite everything, Markus looked peaceful as he lay unconscious.

“If he’s not dead, then he’s still a threat,” Picquery said.

"Markus wanted to end it with the dragons," Declan said. "But Alexander pushed further."

"He's still an accomplice."

Declan just shrugged and with a twist of his wrists both Markus’ blade vanished and his Trades went quiet. When he looked around, though, his eyes narrowed. He spun.

“What?” the president said.

"Shit!” Declan cried.

“What?”

But Tina had noticed. She didn’t move from Newt’s side, but said,

“Moira. She left.”

Moira was falling down stairs. She felt like falling forever, into darkness, away from the pain, away from the shrieking of the spirits and death, down and down.

Someone was trying to pull her back. It was an easy thing to swat them away, like brushing off a fly. She continued down, down. She was holding something. It was still warm, but growing colder as she descended, but that was okay. She was going to bury him. She had found him in the cold, and now he would never be colder.
Someone was saying her name. Someone was grabbing her arms. Strong hands. Their skin burned her and Moira struggled away. She couldn’t stop. They would find her if she stopped.

Her feet crunched on something. Some part of her knew it was gravel, stone. But when she looked all she saw was snow beneath her feet.

She was in Central Park, and she was smaller, and so cold. She crouched down to look under a bench. If she could hide, then the police wouldn’t take her away for sleeping outside. Wizard police or Muggle police, they all would take her somewhere worse.

And under the bench had been a small, blue creature. He had been so small then, so small and alone, just like her. That’s what she had said. She’d asked the small creature where his family was. And the little creature had unfolded its wings and blinked at her and she crawled next to him, huddling as the creature huddled.

My family is gone, she had said. Where is your’s?

And the creature who would be named Kai had chirped and just huddled closer to her. He had been warm. So warm.

Moira saw a flash of green light and heard a heavy thump and the world came crashing back into the present.

Moira was somewhere she had never seen but knew instantly. A wide, dark cavern, the floor glowing with a massive, ancient circle. Dark slime eeked down the walls. The air rotted in her lungs, tasting like sulfur.

The Seal was already beginning to rise off the floor.

Run, Moira! Get out!

She couldn’t leave him, Moira thought. Not alone.

Someone stood before her, but she couldn’t see past his aura, which was a blinding silver and red. A hand caressed her cheek.

“What are you?” the person asked in a soft, freezing voice.

Moira couldn’t move. Her body was heavy, so heavy. She needed to put Kai to bed.

Someone yanked Moira back. She stumbled. The room was slowly coming together again to Moira’s eyes. So much light. There were so many burning souls struggling before her in the glowing Seal. The pulsing blue and gold that was Delcan, standing in front of her, struggling against the massively powerful prescence that was like two men combined in one.

“A valiant effort,” the quiet voice said. His presence flared, and then his magic shredded into Declan’s aura, picking apart the threads of color. Declan’s scream of pain barely sounded human.

It was the sound that woke her. Moira threw herself forward, still holding Kai, then colliding with Declan, sending both of them to the floor.

“Declan?” Moira said.

He was breathing, but his skin was cold and pale, his eyes wide and unseeing. He trembled. It reminded her of another time. On a roof, before a blaze.
The man with the soft voice stood just outside the Seal. The sickly light played over his blonde hair, and at first she thought it was Alexander. But this man was too old. He ignored them both.

“All this time,” the man said. “And all this power was right beneath our feet.”

The light was blinding now. She could barely see the outline of the blonde man who had his arms out like he was embracing everything. The power of the Seal was seeping into his body. Within, Moira saw the spirits swirling around and around, their mouths gaping, their eye socket’s dripping tears. In the center of the Seal was two figures on their knees. Alive, but their lives being drained slowly, painfully. Like Liam's life had. While she had run away.

Moira couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t struggle. What was the point? What was hope now?

The hands were back on her arms.

“Shh,” a voice said in her ear. “I’m here.”

And Moira realized she was screaming. That’s why her head was splitting, why she couldn’t breathe. The arms wrapped around her like a blanket. Moira leaned into the warmth on instinct.

“I’m here, Moira,” the voice, Declan's voice, said. “You’re not alone.”

The other man was on his knees before the Seal. Moira saw the spirits collecting above him, around him, waiting for an order, waiting for a cue to attack. Waiting for her. Because Moira knew, that no matter what the man was planning, the spirits would never be his. Not the way they could be her’s.

“You know, this is pretty terrible,” Declan said. “So I think, at the least, after all this, you’re going to have to marry me, Mo.”

Marry who? Moira wondered distantly. Something stirred in her chest. But the Seal, all that power...She could bring Kai back. She could bring Newt back (he had died, hadn’t he? And she’d run away) and she could rebuild her home, and her neighborhood. Maybe Liam. Maybe mother.

“Yes, I do believe we’ll have to,” Declan continued. “I mean, you can only save my life and I yours so many times before a man gets ideas.”

And Declan. She could protect him. She could protect everyone.

The blonde man was still on his knees, but he was struggling to rise, and couldn’t. His body couldn’t absorb all the spirits’ power that bore down upon him. Unlike Moira. She’d been made to take in everyone’s pain and use it.

Moira turned her head. Declan lay under her holding her. He was bleeding from too many places. She felt like she could see every vein in his body, every pulse of magic and blood in his heart.

“There you are,” Moira whispered.

Declan’s eyes widened. Gently Moira placed Kai in his arms, then rose.

She heard Declan shouting her name but with a wave of her hand he was thrown to the wall and covered in a shield—safe, from what Moira was about to do.

She walked up to the Seal. She let the sounds of the spirits' suffering wash over her, and she felt calm. She could have walked over hot flames and felt nothing. Nothing the spirits could do could hurt worse than she'd already survived.
The man who had wanted the Seal was still on the ground. The spirits were piling on top of him, their power bloating up his body like a corpse in the sun.

He looked at her with discolored eyes. She knew his name.

“It’s mine,” Grindelwald seethed. “I earned it. This power is mine.”

“No,” Moira said. “It’s not.”

Moira stepped inside the ring.

In the room full of broken stone, Tina was half curled over Newt's body, sobbing. She kept breathing wrong, and taking in too much of the scent that still lingered in his air, on his clothes. She thought it was fading though. She barely noticed when all the spirits stopped hitting the windows. She didn't notice the floor shaking, a sound like distant shouts.

But she did notice the light. It drifted over the floor like fog, creeping to touch her and Newt. It felt safe, calm, glowing like sunlight yet cool as rain. Still Tina held Newt closer in case the swirling mist could harm him. As if it could harm him. She felt her tears begin to dry.

Tina looked up, and outside the window she saw only gold. It blinded her. She looked away.

And that's when she felt Newt breathe.
It was like a dream. Moira felt like she was suspended in quiet water and rising towards the surface. Her heart beat impossibly slow in her ears. Then, her magic burst from her like the sun, and then she was flying up, no longer a gentle rise, until she was hovering in the sunlight—she was like the sun, all heat and light and power.

Her body was gone. She was nothing but particles, and the world around her was nothing but particles, and with a wave of a wind she could change everything. She wanted to.

She could see everywhere. There were two bodies in the Seal, their souls connected. With a flick of her finger, Moira rebuilt their souls. It was a test mostly, but it didn’t hurt her, didn’t make her weaken. Maybe she could keep going.

Somewhere in that broken, tall silver building, a woman was crying over a red-haired man. But he wasn’t supposed to die. Moira nodded, and she sensed the man’s heart start again. This seemed to be working pretty well, then, she thought, and floated further until she saw the sky above her, and the city below.

The city stretched below her like a spiky, sparkly carpet. She’d never seen it from so high. This must be what birds see. What God sees. She thought it looked quite small.

More spirits, rogues, swirled through the sky. But of course they were. In the end both she and them wanted to move on. But someone had put a stopper between the sky and that On. She’d get there, but first, the buildings below her were an absolute mess. She hated a mess.

Moira drifted over the broken streets and homes. She imagined herself as a spring rain, the kind of deluge that cleansed the air and brought hope for the next season, and she let her power wash away the fear of the streets in the same way. The buildings on fire she blew out like candles then restacked the bricks and steel. She molded the streets back into shape, and put flowers on the trees. It was fun now.

Finally, there was a barrier across the sky, with the spirits trapped within like flies in a jar. Moira opened the jar, and the spirits flew free and vanished. There now. Much quieter.

Moira drifted up towards that door in the sky. She knew that through that doorway waited people she loved. She could see them...but she couldn’t leave. Something tethered her to the earth. It felt like threads tied around her wrist. If she snapped the threads, she could rise higher. Moira gripped the threads in her hands. She vaguely perceived words whispering in her mind, prayers with her name in them. She tightened her grip on the threads and

they

snapped.

The light blinded Tina at first. She braced herself over Newt. Around her there was roar like a waterfall pouring over the building. Magic coated the air, and the coolness of the fog suddenly vanished. With her senses so bombarded, Tina almost thought she had imagined Newt's chest
moving and when she heard his breath she thought it was just the sound of her own gasps.

The roar faded and so did the blinding light. Tina opened her eyes. The room was perfect again. The stone was righted, the railings intact, even the benches in clear rows beneath the galleries. The only place still broken was the crater she and Newt laid in, as if the magic hadn’t wanted to disturb them.

Dazed, Tina turned to the massive wall of window. Over the city hovered a cloud powerful and trembling like a cumulonimbus, only the rain that poured from it was silver and gold and rose. If Tina had never seen the power of an Obscurus, she wouldn’t have thought what she saw possible. Under the cloud she saw fires extinguished, but also buildings pieced back together, and streets righted, and then she saw small lights rising up like sparks towards the cloud itself. Later, she would know those lights were souls, but then she hadn’t been sure. She hadn’t cared, either, because she heard a horrible rattling cough, and then a gasp against her, and she had looked down into Newt’s wide, almost terrified eyes.

“Newt?” Tina said.

Newt clutched Tina’s arm like an infant. She held fast.

“I’m... alive?” Newt said.

Tina’s response was burying her face in his shoulder and crying in relief. Outside, the strange clouds began to dissipate, and all the lights floated up into the sky. Or almost all. There was one light hovering right over Central Park before it sank to the ground.

The room below was solemn and silent as Declan lowered his hands. Kai was still at his feet, still as death, but fresh sunlight cut into the room from a long, winding tunnel to the sky directly above.

The ring of the Seal was broken, the stone cracked through in some places. Silence. In the center lay two people Declan sort of recognized except they were clinging to each other so he couldn’t see their faces. There was someone else lying outside the Seal. Not Lucas. He still lay crumpled to the side of the room, dead from whatever horrible magic the Wandhand had shot.

Moira was gone.

Declan stumbled forward. His legs were weak as wet paper. He was dizzy and nauseous.

“Moira?” he called.

The two people were trying to stand up. The woman brushed herself off and faced Declan. Her concern washed over him before he automatically blocked her.

“Hey, honey,” Queenie Goldstein said. “You okay?”

Declan paused. The man with Queenie—Jacob, yes, that was him—was giving Declan a knowing look. Declan vaguely perceived the man’s memories of shell shock, of trauma, and what that made a man look like and do.

“I need to find her,” Declan said.

“Find who?” Queenie said. She glanced at the still creature in Declan’s arms. Declan had almost forgotten Kai’s weight.
“I need to find her,” Declan repeated. He stepped into the Seal and walked till he stood below the opening. Above he saw just the sky. A plain blue sky. The sky would look different if she was gone. It had to.

“I need to find her,” Declan whispered. “Because then she’s not dead.”

A hand closed over his shoulder.

“Hey,” Jacob said. “She’s...she might be...”

Declan gazed up. A small cloud drifted by. He heard traffic. People getting on with things.

“Hey fella,” Jacob said. “She’s gone.” Then. “Hey, fella, you’re bleeding pretty bad. Queenie, get something...”

“Hmm,” Declan said. He felt out of his body and cold. The hand released him. But then the weight left his arms. He felt feathers brush his cheek, then a pull at his hair.

Declan craned his neck to see Kai hovering above his head, his wings whipping the dust into the air in graceful arcs. His jade green eyes sparkled with life. The creature chirped and purred before digging his claws firmly into Declan’s collar. Declan realized what was about to happen a second before Kai spread his glistening wings and took off into the sky, hauling Declan along with him.

Tina and Newt walked arm in arm, with Newt’s around Tina’s waist. Tina knew it was half because Newt was still weak (despite gaining strength at an almost unnatural speed) but mostly because she couldn’t imagine letting him go right now. They moved into the hall. Tina still couldn’t believe her eyes. The hallway, the lobby, the entryway, the ceiling and walls, everything was as it had been before the destruction. She half expected Aurors to pass by, to see secretaries ducking in and out of the rooms, to hear the bustle of footsteps and daily magic.

President Picquery stood at the top of the grand staircase staring up at the crisis meter. Her hand rested on the banister. The hand of the great clocks again moved, with the main face showing a vibrant green.

“Madame president!” Tina cried.

The president turned. Her expression was stony. Newt’s arm tightened around Tina’s waist. He hadn’t spoken again, but she knew it was only because he was still weak.

“Goldstein,” the president said. She blinked. “And Mr. Scamander. Alive and well.”

“Thanks to her,” Tina said.

The president looked at the crisis clock again. She sighed. “Yes. Thanks to her. One girl has managed to break our systems in so many ways, yet put them all back together without being asked to.”

Tina did not know how to respond. Fortunately, she didn’t have to, because someone was shouting her name. She saw the elevator flying to their floor and opening. A flash of pink bolted out and crashed into Tina, nearly dislodging Newt, but Tina managed to cling to both.

“Tina,” Queenie gasped. “I’m so sorry, if I had known—thank God you’re all right, I was so—“ and then she began to blubber a little and Tina rubbed her sister’s hair, feeling faint and happy all over
Someone grunted to the side. The wizards spun to see Jacob Kowalski dragging someone else out of
the elevator. Newt moved as if to help but Tina didn’t let him, sure his legs would give out if he left
her side. Jacob seemed to enjoy himself anyway as he hauled the man to the president’s feet and
dropped him unceremoniously.

The president flinched back. Tina did as well.

Even after being dropped like a bag of potatoes, Grindelwald looked cunning.

“That’s who I think it is, right?” Jacob said to the president.

The president nodded. She lowered to a crouch, tilting her head as she regarded Grindelwald. He
appeared to be in the same deep sleep as Markus. Even a good prodding in the nose with a wand
didn’t wake him. The president gave a satisfied nod, though her eyes were troubled.

“It would seem Moira left us some choices,” the president said. "How considerate of her."

Newt exhaled shakily by Tina’s side. Tina gripped his side tighter in response.

Jacob came to Queenie’s side. The two joined hands while they explained to Tina how Markus had
kidnapped the two of them, how they had both been in the Seal, but had been released by
Moira...but the president didn’t seem to be listening. Almost to herself, Picquery said, “One had
wanted justice, and so sought power. The others,” the president stared hard at Grindelwald. “Just
wanted power. Naturally the desire of the second men killed the first.”

“And now you have both,” Newt murmured, startling Tina to attention. Newt gave the president a
long, cautious look. “And what will you do now, Madame President?”

The following quiet was heavy and waiting.

“It won’t be that simple, Mr. Scamander,” the president said. “But I suppose it never is.” She rose
slowly, straightening her robes before saying, “Once again, we owe you a debt.”

“Owe all of us a debt more like,” Jacob muttered. Tina couldn’t help agreeing. Even Newt didn’t
look ready to wave this time off with a humble thank you.

The president’s gaze landed on each in turn. She sighed.

“Fine. What do you want?”

Declan soon decided he did not particularly like flying. Though it was incredible to see New York
healed. Cars and people dashed about as usual. Then again the city looked as usual, if a bit cleaner
somehow.

The buildings vanished beneath him, replaced by green. Central Park. Kai began to lower, his wings
barely making a sound as they beat, until he dropped Declan into a particularly bushy hedge. Most
people didn’t notice, except for one girl who screamed and dropped her ice cream before scampering
off. Declan stayed on his knees a second to collect himself. Kai waited patiently beside him. Once he
was certain his stomach wouldn’t rebel, Declan rose and peered around.

People milled about. Couples with strollers. People feeding pigeons or chatting on benches.
Kai waddled forward, a little awkward until he fell to all fours and crept. His tail lashed against the sidewalk as his head swayed side to side, seeking.

Now people stared. Declan kept his expression calm, as if Kai was no more then a dog in costume. His head hurt. His chest hurt too, but he couldn’t tell if it was broken ribs or just from his heart beating so hard.

Kai continued forward, resolute.

Then Declan found her. She sat on a bench with a straight spine. She wasn’t alone. Of all people, little Peter sat by her side, but was fast asleep with his head on her shoulder. The breeze ruffled his hair. Moira’s hair shifted as well from where it hung loose around her shoulders. She watched Peter closely.

Declan stumbled up to her. “Moira?”

Moira twisted her head a little but didn’t look at him. He approached slowly, because something about her was different. The more important thing, though, was she was safe. Relief made his knees weaker then they already were and he half collapsed onto the bench beside her. There wasn’t much space, so they were nearly touching, but he made sure not to.

“Hey,” he said.

“Hey,” she replied.

More people passed and stared.

“I can’t describe what happened,” Moira said. “Don’t ask me.”

“That’s okay,” Declan said. He pressed his hands flat on his knees. “Glad you’re back.”

Moira reached out and ran her fingers through Peter’s hair. Her silence hurt Declan more than he was expecting. Still he didn’t linger on the thought long because Kai decided to bowl into Moira’s chest. Moira caught the creature close. For the first time, her eyes focused. But Kai struggled away, clammering to lay overtop Peter. Moira smiled down at both of them.

“I had these threads keeping me here,” Moira murmured. “And one of them was Peter, and that’s where I landed. The others...”

Declan sweat in the burning sun. He leaned back and closed his eyes as nausea swept over him and stayed. He was achingly tired. All that magic catching up with him.

Cool fingertips brushed his jaw. He opened his eyes enough to see Moira’s face an inch from his own. Her eyes widened in shock.

“Declan,” she whispered. “You’re—“

He didn’t hear her finish the thought.

The next few moments for Tina were a blur. After hearing of their requests the President had waved her wand and paper contracts had appeared, of all things, and she let them sign each paper, including Jacob. The No Maj man looked a bit overwhelmed in having to use a quill but his glowing smile drowned out any anxiety. He never let go of Queenie’s hand as the papers vanished into the air.
Tina’s eyes slid over towards Newt. He was watching her, grinning, and she smiled back.

The doors below opened. Aurors poured in, hustling up the stairs. Seeing grindelwald on the floor all of them fanned out and circled him.

“There’s another in Trial Room 7,” the president said. She sighed. “We’ll have to get that Falcon boy to release the spell on them. Otherwise, they’ll never wake.”

“A sleeping spell?” Robert Haywood said, incredulous. ”Can we just stop with the ancient magic already?”

Tina wavered a little on her feet. Newt’s warm hand closed on her chin and guided her head towards his gaze. Tina struggled feebly to look away. She didn’t succeed, then Newt cried “Doctor! Which of you is a doctor?”

Tina was about to complain but then pain racked her head and she almost passed out. She was quickly transferred to the nearest functioning magic hospital—obviously, the one at MACUSA was empty of staff—and in what felt like a few breaths was in a white hospital bed and had some nervous, overtired-looking doctor poking at her.

She heard Newt pace outside the hospital room, saw his shadow pass in front of the door every few steps.

The doctor nodded. “Mild concussion. No heavy activity. Stay in bed.”

“What about travel?” Tina thought of her plans with worry. “I need to leave the country soon.”

“Three weeks and you can,” the doctor said finally.

The door swung open. Tina expected Newt, but a harried nurse appeared instead.

“Doctor,” the nurse said. “We have two street kids. One’s got internal bleeding, broken ribs, possible —”

“Thank you, Irma,” the doctor said quickly, going to the nurse and following her out.

Tina waited in the quiet for a few long moments. She looked around. Technically, no one had told her she had to stay. She disliked hospitals. The sheets always felt used no matter how many washes she knew they’d had.

The door opened again. Newt stole in, inching the door closed behind him. He still wore the clothes from the fight, though he’d managed to wash his face and hair enough that it glowed. Tina's heart fluttered looking at him.

He pulled up a chair at her side.

“Better?”

“Concussion,” Tina said. She pushed herself up. “That’s not going to get in the way of the plans, is it?”

“Not at all,” Newt said. “I haven’t even sent word to the Ministry yet. You don’t have to worry about the job position until then.”

Tina hesitated, waiting for him to mention their engagement. But Newt didn’t, smiling at her.
“What happened to you?” Tina asked carefully. “Before, I mean, I thought...the poison...”

“I couldn’t really say.” Some of the light faded from his eyes. “I remember your voice. I think...I spoke...but I can’t remember, and then I was so cold and it was alarmingly dark—”

He had gone so pale Tina took his hand. He held tight. A little smile warmed his face.

“Either way,” he said. “I’ll be glad of your company across the Atlantic. There’s much I would like to show you in England.”

If she were being honest Tina didn't really give a damn about England at the moment, job opportunity or no. She smiled anyway and the two just held hands in the quiet for a bit.

“It worked out well for Queenie and Jacob, though,” Newt finally said. “I guess I forgot they would also be on the boat as well.”

“I’m sure we wouldn’t forget them.”

"They wouldn't let us, you mean,” Newt said. Tina laughed. Newt's eyes gleamed as he watched her and his smile turned thoughtful.

“A few weeks isn’t long to plan a wedding,” Newt mused. Tina’s heart leapt. Newt shrugged. “But I’m sure Queenie will whip together what she wants. She has a way with that, doesn’t she? And Jacob seems easy enough to please.”

Tina’s pulse skipped again. Was he talking about their wedding? Or Queenie’s?

“I guess if their marriage happens in England, it would still be legal here. At least now...” Newt shook his head. He noticed Tina’s expression then and said, “Are you worried?”

“It’s not that,” Tina’s voice was faint. Did he not remember? The world could not be that cruel to her right now. But if he didn't remember...then...

Newt leaned closer, his brows tense together.

“No one will think twice about a muggle and wizard marrying in England,” he said. “There is nothing for you to fear. Or, I shouldn’t say people won’t think twice, but there are less legal barriers involved.”

“Newt,” Tina interrupted. “I’m fine, okay? They will be fine.”

Newt’s mouth closed. He lowered his chin, and for a moment Tina worried she'd been too sharp, but then peered up at her through his hair.

“You are?” he said. "Fine, I mean. You’re not...going anywhere.”

“No.” That, despite everything, Tina knew for certain. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Chapter End Notes

There's a little angst coming up (like the whole thing hasn't been a little angsty lol) but I promise it will all work out like a beautiful sunset :D
thanks for the reads,
~lize
At some point, Tina fell asleep. When she woke up the room had gone dark save for the slats of electric light pouring through the still unclosed blinds. She could see daybreak eeking in on the horizon.

Her head was full of knives again, prodding and poking around her skull. She considered ringing for a nurse. She wouldn't see Queenie until later today, and she wanted to not have a raging headache when she saw her sister again. Though she wasn’t sure what medicine the doctors would give her at this point...

The room smelled a bit odd, she thought. Something sharp and cool, like peppermint and rain. It soothed her head a little.

“Hey.”

Tina nearly bolted out of the bed. She turned her head to see Moira sitting in the chair that Newt had once resided in. The girl was mixing something with a mortar and pedestal. The source of the smell, Tina presumed. Tina's eyes rolled side to side, almost expecting a doctor to stride in and bark at Moira, for Kai to fly through the window. But nothing happened.

Moira was calm, deliberate, not meeting Tina’s gaze, but not seeming to avoid it either. She appeared completely healthy (rosy-cheeked, even), but there was lines of tension around her mouth, and her clothes were rumpled and torn. Tina wondered where Kai was.

“It’s the middle of the night,” Tina said.

“Almost dawn, actually.” Moira added some red seeds to the mixture and a bitter smell filled the room. “This should help with your headache. I’m making a lot of it for Scamander too.”

When Tina said nothing, Moira kept talking. “I’m here for Declan, actually. He’s in the room next door, funny enough. Asleep though. He had some wounds too, couldn’t heal himself after using all that magic. He almost died, you know, and of course Newt—“

“Hey,” Tina said.

Moira stopped her hands and looked up. Her grey eyes caught the yellow light from the window. Tina couldn’t help thinking of the golden light pouring from the sky, watching the city being rebuilt before her eyes. She’d expected Moira to look aged and mature, or on the opposite side, glowing with power and reborn somehow...but the girl just looked tired and a little nervous. Like usual.

“You saved us,” Tina said. “Thank you.”
Moira went completely still, her eyes lowering to the bowl in her hand, which tilted a bit in her shaking grip.

“You’re probably sick of hearing it,” Tina said awkwardly into the silence.

“You’re the first to say it. No one else knows, really, that it was me.” Moira’s eyes flickered up, her gaze like cool grey smoke. “Thank you.”

Tina smiled a bit and settled back in the bed. Moria continued to work for the next few minutes. Then, once satisfied, she rose and approached Tina. Tina eyed her, hoping she wouldn’t have to eat the gloppy green mess. Instead, Moira dabbed her fingers into the bowl and then pressed the balm gently against Tina’s temples.

Instantly, Tina’s pain began to wane. She hadn’t realized how hard it had been to focus her eyes until then.

“Wow,” Tina breathed.

“Good stuff, right?” Moira grinned. “Old family recipe. Also works for hangovers. You’re welcome.”

“How much did you make?”

“Enough.”

Tina closed her eyes, reveling in the soothing lack of pain. Without the sharp aches, she could focus on other sensations. Her heart thudded loudly in the small room. The sun warmed her skin as it peaked through the slats in the blinds. A small part of her wished she could see the sunrise, and that made her think of the city being rebuilt. She wondered if Moira would ever tell her what that was like. Then a larger part wondered where Newt was.

“Hey, Miss Goldstein?”

“Hmm.” Tina’s eyes opened.

“You ever gonna get married?”

Tina’s head snapped towards Moira. The girl was back in her chair, leaning over her knees with her hands clasped in front of her. She met Tina’s gaze levelly, as if she’d just asked about funeral arrangements.

“Uh,” Tina said. “Why do you ask?”

Moira shrugged. “Just wanted your opinion.”

Tina knew that was a lie. Her heart flickered. Were Moira and Newt in cahoots with each other? Is that why he disappeared suddenly? Was this some kind of test, seeing if she wanted marriage or not? Was that why he hadn’t mentioned his proposal yet?

Under Tina’s stare, Moira swallowed and said,

“It was just something Declan said.” Moira ran her hands over her hair. “True, he was half dying like an idiot and there was a lot of other stuff going on but...”

*These men and confusing proposals*, Tina thought. She said aloud, calmly enough, “What did he say?”
“How do you know?” Moira said instead. “If you want to get married. What makes you know?”

For someone contemplating something similar, Tina was surprisingly at a loss for words. She hadn’t really thought about it much before. She didn’t have many female friends, and when they started talking about weddings she normally tuned out. It just hadn’t seemed realistic to think about. Plus, times as they were, it didn’t seem like a woman needed marriage anymore, and why get trapped after all?

It was like she had those thoughts, then she had Newt. It was kind of scary that she wasn’t sure she could reconcile those yet.

“What do you think?” Tina said.

“I think marriage is work,” Moira said. “But it could have a nice payoff in the end.”

She made it sound like a stock investment, Tina thought.

“But shelter, that’s the main thing.” Moira’s eyes gleamed. “It’s knowing you have a place with someone, safe and secure, and promising to stay. That’s how my parents were, anyway. Though Declan’s parents didn’t have a good time of it. But I mean,” Moira started to blush. “They had so many kids. So something was working, right?”

“Something,” Tina said, amused. “Sure.”

Moira’s eyes suddenly brightened. She sat up straight in her chair and gripped the arm rests.

“That’s the problem!” she said. “I just don’t know.”

“Isn’t that where we started?” Tina asked, confused.

Moira had already burst out of the chair. She shoved the bowl of paste into Tina’s hands then flew out the door. Tina heard a doctor’s shout before the door closed again.

Something rattled under the bed. Bewildered, Tina leaned over to see Newt’s suitcase slide out from underneath. It popped open. Newt climbed out, knocking his boots to clean them before closing the suitcase again. When he turned, he beamed down on her. The sun trailed in the gold strands in his mused hair. His eyes sparked with life and excitement.

Tina’s heart fell over in her chest.

“Morning,” he said. “How do you feel?”

“Better,” Tina said.

“Good.” Newt reached out, and his fingertips brushed Tina’s temple. Tina was smiling until Newt drew back his hand and there was green on his fingertips.

“What’s this?” he wondered.

“Moira,” Tina replied. She fought the urge to straighten her hair over what must have looked like peas smashed around her face. She gestured out with the bowl. Newt inspected it a second before he set it aside and looked back at Tina.

“The doctor said last night that you would be good to leave today. And if you didn’t mind, I took the liberty of booking our cabin on the ship as well.”
Cabin, Tina noted. Singular.

At her gaze, Newt blushed a little. “I can ask for different arrangements...”

“I’m just surprised the No Maj’s gave it to us, considering we aren’t married.”

This was the moment, Tina thought. He would remember that he asked her. He would. He’d ask again, and she would say...

Newt turned completely red and lowered his eyes. “Like I said, for the sake of your modesty I can change the arrangements, I didn’t think lying at this point would—“

Tina laughed, despite the tightening of her chest, and took Newt’s hand. “It’s fine, Newt. Just fine.”

Moira stormed into the next room. Now Declan was awake and chatting with one of the nurses. He still had bandages wrapped around his chest, but they’d taken the ones off his face, so when he turned and smiled she could see the whole expression, crooked teeth and all. He’d begged her to not heal one of the cuts over his eyebrow, so it would scar “nicely” as he put it. Idiot.

Keeping her nerve, Moira strode up to the bed and said,

“You need to kiss me.”

The nurse squeaked. Declan froze mid-smile.

“Pardon?” he said.

“Are you family?” the nurse asked, perturbed.

“Now,” Moira said to Declan.

“I’ll just...” the nurse skittered for the door and closed it behind her.

Declan stared blankly at Moira for a second. Then his eyes narrowed. “This is about what I said earlier, isn’t it?”

“When you proposed to me?” Moira said. “Yes, it’s about that.”

“Well, you said no,” Declan leaned over, away from her, to pick something off the desk. “So that’s that, then.”

Moira watched his back and his shoulder blades shifting, half for medical interest. He’d had a few broken ribs, and some gashes she’d healed herself, but otherwise he looked healthy. He always did have rather wide shoulders and decent muscle definition, and his skin looked tanner then she expected, and yet oddly soft, like he’d—

Declan layed back in place and Moira startled back a few inches, holding in her blush. It took her a moment to focus on what he was holding out. It was a book, she realized, with a beat up faded cover and inked black pages.

“This is your book-keeping, isn’t it?” Moira took the book, glanced at him. “What about it?”

Declan grinned. “The president approached me. Said that if I did the numbers and had the names, she could bring in every one of Markus’ crooked pals. They’ll take him and them in one swoop.”
“Seriously?” Moira stared at the harmless looking book. “That would be something.”

“A big something,” Declan agreed. He was practically beaming. “Gets both of us off scot-free with MACUSA—

“Should’a had that anyway, those Goldblooded basta—“

“Not to mention,” Declan interrupted her interrupting. “With Markus and me gone, the Falcons won’t be a problem anymore, and if it gets out that it was ’cause of me—“

“People’ll think you’re a snitch?” Moira was alarmed now.

“No.” Declan looked affronted. “That I’m respectable. That I did the right thing, and if they want a guy and a bookkeeper that does the right honest thing then...why are you laughing?”

Moira couldn’t help herself. She was half bent-double, the book clutched tight to her chest. It had been so long since she laughed that it seemed irrepresible, and when she finally finished, Declan was still staring owlishly at her.

“Declan, honey,” Moira calmed her breathing. “You’re the squarest guy in our neighborhood. Even when you were second in command to Markus and a half gangster, people still had you doin’ their bookkeeping and invited you to dinner. That’s not changing.”

“Well,” Declan said, but his eyes took on a different gleam, a honed focus on her. He stopped smiling, and Moira stopped laughing. Her heart began to do cartwheels again. She felt hot and cold, like when you stand outside and then the sun suddenly goes behind the clouds.

“What?” she said.

“You think I’m square,” he said. “No fun, being a square. Bit dull.”

“You are dull,” Moira teased, unsure of his expression. “But honest, like you said. That’s fine with me.”

His arms were crossed. Or that’s what she thought, till suddenly one of his hands was behind her head and yanked her forward and then his mouth was on her’s.

Moira made a surprised noise through her nose. Her breath halted and her hands flew up, bracing against his taunt arms. She felt little sparks up and down her skin, felt the pulse of his heart under her fingertips at his wrist, and when he tilted her head something hot speared in her belly and she leaned forward into him.

He pulled back. She felt his thumb trace around her chin, light and gentle. When her eyes met his, his eyes were half hooded, his smile making her skin heat.

“Did you call me honey?” he said.

“What?”

“A few minutes back.”

“I called you dull,” Moira sniffed. “Big difference.”

And before Declan could argue, Moira leaned in and distracted him.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the late updates! *apologetic groveling*. But here we are winding down to the finale where we wonder...what is up with Newt's proposal? Is Declan a fine kisser? and where is Kai anyway?

thanks for the reads!
~lize
Moving everything from their apartment was harder than Tina thought it would be. Not that the Goldsteins had that many things that couldn’t be packaged or otherwise sent across. Tina had few expectations about in the apartment—no, flat that MACUSA was letting to her in England, and no idea how it would be furnished or laid out. Newt told her the neighborhood was a decent leg from the MACUSA embassy in London proper, but it shouldn’t be an issue since she could simply Apparate in.

Tina was trying to understand the casualness with which magic was used in England but she felt she’d have to see it. Thinking about it too much just made her giddy.

Thinking about Newt a lot didn’t help either. He still hadn’t clarified, or even mentioned, his proposal, and if he didn’t then she had no idea—

“Just ask him!” Queenie cried for the fifth time.

It was just the two sisters in the apartment at this point. Jacob and Newt had gone to do the final check-up on Jacob’s bakery. Their ship was to leave that afternoon.

“I can’t just ask him!” Tina snapped. She wrapped up a tea cup, nearly tearing the packing paper. She calmed her hands. “I’m thinking it was just a spot of delirium. No one asks to get married while they’re dying. What’s the point?”

“It’s romantic,” Queenie said. “It’s a...it was saying what he always wanted to say because he didn’t have much time left.”

“Queenie, he’s never even said he loves me.” Tina hadn’t realized that fact until she said it, and a bitter taste came into her mouth. She levelled her voice. “I think that’s the first step even in the most romantic things, right?”

Queenie set her hand on her hip. “Honey. At this point, the love is kind of self-explanatory, don’t you think?”

“I need the words.” Tina shook her head. “I just do.”

There was a knock at the door, then it opened. Jacob and Newt stole in with excited grins to each other like school-boys skipping class. How Mrs. Esposito still hadn’t noticed them, Tina never knew. The guys carried large white bags from Jacob’s bakery, though, and Queenie happily set out a blanket on the floor since the table and crockery was long packed.

“So, looks better in here,” Jacob said, glancing around. “Everything’s all packed, right?”

Better was an odd word. To Tina the apartment looked empty. She and her sister had lived in the space a while, and it was always unnerving to realize that an apartment is never yours. Someone else would move in, put different things on the wall, different rugs on the floors. And they’d never know that two sisters had spent so many memories here.

Queenie replied cheerfully to Jacob, but Newt’s hand strayed over and took Tina’s. She leaned against him a bit.
“How are the Kyrans?” Tina asked.

“A bit despondent, I think,” Newt said. “I was hoping we’d see Moira and Kai before we left, so they could have a proper good bye, but seeing as we haven’t…”

Neither Tina nor Newt had seen Moira since she’d rushed out of Tina’s hospital room. Not that it had been that long, but Tina was a bit worried. And, if she was being honest, a bit hurt. They had been through so much but everything felt too sensitive now, so she didn’t think about it as much as she could, but...

“She could’ve at least dropped in before we left,” Tina found herself saying. “I mean, she knows where we live. It might be nice to have her over and a crisis not be happening.”

Tina took another bite of her sandwich, chewing hard, while everyone else exchanged looks.

“I’m sure it’s nothin’ personal, Teen,” Queenie said. “I mean, she might not know what to say. Or have anything to say.”

“Yeah, what’s the follow up for nearly destroying New York City, then putting it back together?” Jacob smiled. “Kinda tough for a kid anyway.”

“She could say, ‘good luck on your trip. I hope everything works out.’” Tina sniffed. “I mean, I managed just fine when Newt left last time.”

“As the only person with vast experience destroying New York,” Newt grinned. "I can tell you that was appropriate.”

The group laughed. The sounds warmed the air and for a moment Tina forgot that they would be leaving soon. But the meal finished quickly. Queenie took care of the trash with Jacob following her out, leaving Newt and Tina alone in the apartment.

The quiet closed in. Newt put his hands in his pockets and pivoted, taking in the empty space. Tina fiddled with the wrapping on the tea cups but she couldn’t find anything else to pack.

“Are you sad?” Newt asked. “To leave, I mean.”

“I don’t know. A bit, yes,” Tina said.

Newt faced her. He tilted his head, his voice gentle. “Just a bit?”

Without warning, Tina’s eyes boiled over and she sobbed. Newt took her into his arms. His one hand rubbed her back while the other cradled the back of her head.

“I’m sorry,” Tina said. “I d-didn’t think it w-w-would be...a scene...”

“It’s okay,” Newt shushed. “Just let it go.”

“I am happy,” Tina said. She drew back a little so she could look at him. “I am happy to go...to go with you, Newt. You have to believe that.”


Tina held his gaze. His eyes were so mesmerizingly green, and yet warmed by the flecks of brown. She loved standing this close so she could see all his freckles, all the small scars around his mouth and his eyebrows, all the small details other people would miss.
She could ask him now, she realized. Ask him what he wanted from their relationship, ask him...But Newt’s eyes darkened, and he leaned in and kissed her. It was a careful brush more then anything but it woke Tina up like a spark on kindling. She wrapped her arms around him. He sighed into her mouth, deepening the kiss instantly, and Tina slid her hands up and into his hair to anchor herself and Newt responded, moving her back, towards the wall-

“Oh my.”

The two flew apart from each other.

Moira stood in the doorway, a smirk on her face and a large basket on her arm. Behind her was Declan, with a young boy on his shoulders, and Declan had one long hand over the boy’s eyes.

“Don’t see why I can’t see it!” the young boy said. “You and Moira do the same thing, all the time.”

Declan looked fit to reply but Moira coughed. “Can we come in?”

“Sure,” Tina replied, still a bit in shock. The small party entered. Tina noted that all three wore clean, new looking clothes, simple but sturdy. Declan set the boy down, who ran over to the window and opened it wide. Kai darted into the space carrying another wrapped bundle. He deposited it gracefully on top of a box before landing on the boy's shoulders. Both chattered with joy.

All this motion happened in so few seconds that it took Tina a moment to process Moira's approach. When the girl practically shoved the basket at her Tina almost shoved back from reflex.

“For you,” Moira smiled, proud. "From the burrow."

The basket was heavy surprisingly heavy and Tina looped both arms under it.

"What's in it?" Newt asked. At the sound of his voice, the young boy abandoned his exploration of the boxes. He stared wide-eyed at Newt, then bee-lined over. Kai clung for dear life to the boy's shoulders.

“Mr. Scamander!” the boy beamed. “Fancy seeing you.”

Newt crouched down. “Hello, Peter. How are you? Seen any Gnarlyknats?”

"Not for lack of trying," Declan murmured, following behind to stand next to Moira. Moira nudged him with her elbow.

Peter was oblivious to all this. “No, not specifically a sighting, but I swore that the other day I saw a Demiguise. I mean he was invisible but I saw him, you know?”

“I’m sure,” Newt said sincerely.

Peter watched Newt closely, as if testing him, then he grabbed Moira's coat. "Make him open my gift first."

Moira laughed. It was a loud, cracking burst of sound, and took Newt and Tina by surprise. Kai clamored onto Moira's shoulder, wrapping his neck around under Moira's chin, and Moira made a small purring sound to him. Declan watched over the whole scene with an adoring grin.

It was all so bizarre, Tina thought to herself, what kind of families the world threw together.

Anyway,” Moira said into the sudden quiet. "You’re leaving today, right? We were going to come by earlier, only—"
“We were a bit busy,” Declan said.

Moira blushed and ran her hands through her hair. It was then Tina noticed the ring on her hand. Moira caught her look.

“It’s just a promise ring,” Moira said quickly. “Nothing too serious—“

“It’s very serious,” Declan said, moving to wrap his arm around Moira’s shoulders, making Kai shift. A matching ring sat on his hand. “So serious that she’s embarrassed about it, and won’t tell anyone willingly.”

Moira punched him in the ribs. Declan took the blow with good grace, grinning like an idiot at her till she blushed and focused back on Tina.

Tina felt a small space warming in her heart.

“Anyway,” Moira shook her head. “Open the basket. You got a boat to catch, right?” Moira lifted her hand and waved it, and the other parcel floated over.

“Right,” Newt rose and stood behind Tina, peering over her shoulder. His other hand snaked around her waist. She smiled to herself. Tina unwrapped the brown paper atop the basket. Inside was small, individually wrapped packages, some in brown butcher’s paper, some in newspaper, some tied off with colorful ribbon or yarn. Newt took the basket as Tina unwrapped each gift. The first was a glass, sealed jar. The label held a sketch of a beautiful flower.

"That’s honey from my mum,” Declan said proudly. "Best in the city, it is. She uses these orange flowers all the way from my cousin up state."

Tina nodded, said her thanks, but continued opening gift after homely gift. As she did, the narration continued.

"That’s salve from O’Connor,” Moira said. "Use it for burns, and that one over there for cuts, and the one over there for...well I put a list in--oh and those are some pot holders from Mrs. Jenny Marbles, and that’s some lace trimming from Betsy the haberdasher, all hand made you know..."

"Glass from Cassie’s father,” Declan said as Tina held a silver-laced, flower shaped paper weight to the light. Rainbows refracted through it. She set it aside and reached for another small wrapped gift. Tina realized her hands were beginning to shake. Newt took the rock and unwrapped it.

"That’s mine!” Peter shouted. The rock was painted a multitude blues and blacks, and when Tina turned it, she saw a pair of jade green eyes and a small beak painted in the center.

"I made all of it," Peter puffed his shoulders. "Had Kai stand still forever to get his snout right. Well, I didn't make the rock, but you see.."

"It’s beautiful," Tina said. She felt tears well in her eyes. Newt was speechless.

There was so many things in the basket, from so many hands and lives. No Maj and Magic alike. It was like each object Tina or Newt touched was a shaken hand, a kind word. It was overwhelming. From the corner of her eye, Tina saw Newt wipe a tear away.

"It's the least they could do,” Moira said. "They know it was you two that helped us, you know. I've been walking so long collecting everything I was half-dead yesterday."

"And there will probably be more," Declan added. "Don't ever expect your mailbox in England to be
"Good," Newt said. "That's perfect."

Moira flashed another smile. "Oh, you haven't seen perfect yet."

And with that, she handed over the last bundle. Tina set the basket down gently while Newt took it into his arms. It flopped a little in its grey paper wrapping. The bow on it was wide and purple satin. Carefully, Newt unwrapped it, until a beautiful woven blanket unfurled over his arms in a wave of cheerful color. It was a quilt style knit blanket, with each square holding the same rigid square pattern but in a multitude of shades—lavender, emerald, teal, butter yellow, sunrise orange, fire engine red.

Tina touched the yarn. It was angel wing soft. A sudden wave of peace, and well-being, washed over her. She was reminded suddenly of another blanket that her mother had laid over her when she was sick, so long ago, and she smiled at the memory.

"It's working," Declan whispered to Moira, who had an expectant expression.

Newt and Tina said, "what's working?"

"I hope you don't mind," Moira smiled, a bit unsure now. "I put a spell on it. It's a healing blanket. My mum always had one. You lay it over yourself if you have a bad day, or a bit of a cold or cough, and it makes you feel better. Calms you down, helps you sleep at night. And I thought, with all this change about to happen, and moving..." Moira cleared her throat, and met Tina's gaze. "It's scary, you know, going to a new place where everyone knows you're different. But it'll get better. Keep goin' outside, and one day you won't dread going out the door."

Tina clutched the quilt in her hands. Newt was completely still.

Moira scuffed her boot on the floor. "Anyway, I guess we should..."

Tina didn't think. She pushed the blanket into Newt's arms and rushed Moira with a hug. She felt the girl stiffen, then slowly relax, but not enough to return the hug.

It didn't matter, though, because a smaller set of arms wrapped around Tina and Moira's legs. Then another set, and Tina recognized Newt's woody scent, then another set of arms wrapped around them all and she felt Declan's laughter. Kai hummed. And, hesitantly, Tina felt Moira return her hug.

It was only a moment, but it set Tina's mind straight. This was how stories should always end, she thought. With some simple sign of understanding.

"Alright," Moira said. No one moved. The girl fidgeted. "I said, alright!"

With a laugh Tina drew back, bringing Newt with her. Moira was as red as a fire hydrant, and she stared down at the floor. Declan couldn't stop smiling.

"We should probably be goin'," Moira said awkwardly.

Before Tina could respond, someone else did for her. Judging by the timber, and how it shook the case a few feet from Newt, Tina thought it might be the Nundu complaining about its lunch.

Tina's aplomb was not shared by the others. Moira almost jumped a mile, except Peter was suddenly clinging to her coat. Kai in response to the distress spread his wings while still on Moira's shoulders, trying to make himself look bigger.
"What the hell was that?" Declan asked.

"Not hell," Newt muttered. "Just a loose hinge."

He wandered over to the case and opened it. Another roar burst out and Newt called down to his creatures, asking for calm.

Peter peeked out from behind Moira's coat. His eyes rounded as he watched Newt talking into a suitcase. An odd sort of shock came over the boy's face.

Newt turned his head. His hair was falling a bit over his eyes, giving his smile a secretive, almost rakish quality.

"Peter," he said. "Would you like to meet Dougal?"

"The Demiguise?" Peter said. "Where is he?"

Newt looked at Moira, silently asking permission. When Moira took Peter's hand Newt added, "And if you wouldn't mind, Moira, I have a few Kyrans that need to say farewell to their flock mates."

"Oh, sure," Moira tried to hide her eagerness. "I mean, if I have to."

Kai didn't need another word. He jumped off Moira's back and flew into the case. Peter gasped, and rounded on Moria again.

"What is that?" Peter said. "How did he go down into a suitcase? Where did he go?"

Everyone glanced at each other.

“It’s more in the showing then the telling,” Moira said, and without further prompting Peter ventured into the case.

Chapter End Notes

Wrapping up these ends is some kind of work, but I'm loving it. Hopefully, you all are as well. Thanks for the reads!

~lize
Moira watched the ship sink into the distance. She hadn’t ever done that before, standing on the shore and waving till her arm went numb, watching a massive liner leave New York. There had been hundreds of people around them yet she had felt, in that moment, oddly alone and quiet.

Declan had his arm around her. Her free hand was held by Peter, who was carefully guarding three large, elegant feathers.

One red. One green. One black.

The sun was going to set soon. The crowd began to disperse. Chatter, some tears, lots of handkerchiefs and hats.

Moira finally lowered her hand.

“Do you think you should have told them?” Declan asked after a few moments.

“Told them what? About the program?”

Declan shook his head, smiling. Moira was referring to MACUSA’s solution to the “Hands only” magic problem, and power vaccuum in the 4th district. Something about opening education centers, starting a local watch force, using Moira and Declan as intermediaries in the area for their outreach.

None of them were bad ideas, but Moira figured the Goldies would have to realize the fourth wasn’t a burrow to take orders well. Needless to say there were interesting times ahead.

“No,” Declan smiled. “About the blanket?”

“What about it?”

Declan’s grin widened. “You know.”

“Oh, you mean that it’s also fireproof, waterproof, rip-proof, and basically every form of creature proof?” Moira shrugged. “I’m sure they’ll find out if they need to. Knowing them...they’ll probably find out sooner than later.”

Now Declan laughed. Peter tugged on Moira’s hand, confused by what they were talking about, and Moira gave him a reassuring smile. Peter returned to looking at the water.

Declan leaned down and whispered in her ear, “You know exactly what I am talking about.”

Goosebumps rose on Moira’s skin that had nothing to do with the December air.
“Oh, you mean *that* spell,” Moira shrugged again, only this time she couldn’t contain her smile. “Well. They’ll find out about that one soon enough. If they need to.”

“Hopefully they’ll use it after they’re married.”

“It’ll only work if they *want* kids. I’m not a fool. It’ll be a while anyway.” Moira shook her head. “Two people in love like that, and they ain’t marrying. What idiots.”


Moira glared up at him. He kissed her on the nose, knowing it would make her glare deepen. “It’s okay, love. I love how you meddle.”

Moira lifted herself up and kissed him square on the mouth. Declan started a little, but before he could fully enjoy it she pulled back and smiled at him.

“And I love you,” she said. “So I guess that solves that.”

Declan’s look softened.

“Hey!” Peter shouted. Moira and Declan both half-jerked out of a sort of trance to find the docks empty, and the sun beginning to set. Peter was scowling.

“It’s getting freezing,” he said. “Can we go home?”

Moira whistled. She felt pulses of cold air, then Kai landed on Peter’s shoulders, wrapping around his neck to keep him warm. Peter laughed.

Declan kept his arm around Moira. Moira held on to Peter’s hand. Together, they walked home.

“Do you think they’ll do it?” Tina asked Newt as they sat on the ocean liner. “Get married, settle down, be alright?”

“Probably,” Newt said. He had his forearms braced on the railing. His suitcase was beside him. It rocked a little, and that had nothing to do with the boat. “I’d welcome a visit from them in England, if they ever could.”

Tina tried to imagine it. Moira and Declan, married, sitting across from her at a table and having a usual meal, without any sort of catastrophe happening. It almost seemed too absurd.

“I don’t know,” Tina bit her lip. “I’m worried. What if the President does something to Moira? Or what if the burrow just gets another gang in charge? What if—“

“What if a meteor falls from the sky,” Newt said. “Hits Manhattan, and sinks the entire city?”

Tina turned her head, staring at him. “That is *way* more improbable than anything I suggested.”

“But just as out of your control.”

Tina sighed and gazed back over the water. Already, Manhattan’s profile had been swallowed by the horizon, leaving only water lapping against the sides of the boat. Despite the sun beginning to set, most of the passengers had ventured belowdecks to avoid the chill. Tina was glad for her extra warm coat, and for Newt standing close beside her, sharing his warmth without knowing it.
In a small movement, Newt’s hands covered her’s.

“I’m glad you came with me,” Newt said softly.

Little sparks of sunset caught in the waves like rubies and citrines, and the water seemed almost black. When he looked at her, the golden sunlight caught in his eyes, making them glow like the water, and Tina’s heart swooned a little.

“I think it’ll be exciting,” Tina said. “I’ve never been to London before. Is it like New York?”

“Yes and no,” Newt laughed. “You will just have to see it, I suppose.”

“And your family? Your friends?”

“You’ll have to see them too.”

When Tina said nothing, her hands tightening on the rail, Newt added softly,

“You will find your place, Tina. Don’t worry.”

“And is that place with you?”

“What?”

She couldn't take back the words. She repeated, “Is that place with you, Newt?”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

Tina’s grip on the railing had turned survival-strong, her knuckles white as bones. For a moment, she had this odd sensation, like her mouth was full of cotton as she riveted her gaze on Newt. The sun darkened behind him.

It was happening.

He stared at her like she’d grown another face, like he’d never seen her before. “Tina...”

“I mean,” Tina took a deep breath, exhaled. “Newt. When you...when you were dying...”

“I’m sorry,” Newt interrupted. The hand that had covered hers now hung by his side, his other hand running through his hair. “Are you...questioning your feelings for me? Now? That we are on the boat?”

“Of course I am!” Tina snapped. “There’s no better time! Dammit, Newt, you’ve never even said you loved me! How could I possibly know...”

Now Newt looked like she’d just hit him over the head. A feeling like hot lava bubbled in Tina’s chest, threatening to pour out of her in words she couldn’t even identify.

Newt’s intense eyes bored into her. His hand froze in his hair.

“Yes I have,” Newt replied. “I’m sure I have.”

“When?” Tina barked. “When did you say it? Because I wasn’t there.”

Newt spun away from her, walking a few steps and lowering his head before he stillled. Tina practically held her breath.
The water sloughed by. The stars began to emerge, half in the daylight, half in the night.

“Merlin’s beard,” Newt said, staring up at the sky. “I’ve never said it, have I?”

Tina couldn’t speak. She shivered, and waited.

“I was sure, that one time when you kissed me by the fire,” Newt’s brows drew together. “No, it was when I woke up next to you when I was hurt—no, it was the time that you were falling into the sink and laughing. You looked so beautiful.”

Tina’s chest felt like it was full of bees, her whole body humming, till Newt turned to her and said, “And, of course, when I thought I was dying at MACUSA.”

“Oh, that,” Tina waved her hand. “I already know.”

Newt grew quiet. Tina’s eyes slid over and she was shocked to see him gawking at her.

“Know what?” Newt said.

Tina swallowed hard. So he didn’t remember. He hadn’t...he hadn’t know he proposed. God, this was going to hurt. She braced herself. It was like tearing a bandage off her naked heart.

“Well, you asked me to marry you,” Tina said. “While you were dying. But you weren’t in your right mind, were you?” Tina blushed. “I understand, it was a tough situation and you probably...”

“I proposed to you,” Newt stated with an odd, dawning expression. Tina shrugged, trying to keep her voice nonchalant even as she had to grip the railing behind her, and couldn’t look at him directly.

“Yes, you asked me to marry you.”

“I see.” Newt lowered his eyes to his hands on the rail, close to hers but not touching. “Well, I have...I remember...” He turned his head away from her before he asked. “What did you say?”

“What did I say?”

“When I asked you, yes.”

“Well,” Tina said. “I said yes.”

“Right, I remember that as well. So, just for clarification,” Newt nodded to himself. “I proposed, you said yes, so I have been under the assumption, or maybe the better word is impression, that we are, in fact, engaged.” His head snapped to face her, and his face was deep red, his voice almost too soft as he said, “Am I wrong?”

Tina’s heart fell down to her ankles. Her mouth dropped open.

“We’re...”

“We followed the usual process, didn’t we?” Newt was turning an alarming shade of purple now. “Besides maybe me nearly dying. That’s admittedly unorthodox. Is there something I have missed here?”

“No! I mean, not no as in—but you weren’t aware of yourself so I just assumed I had to say anything to—Newt, you were dying! It was stressful! What was I gonna say, no?”

All the seething color drained from Newt's face. He staggered. She moved forward to help but he
warded her off. They stopped apart from each other, tense, each trying to peer into the other's thoughts.

“Well,” Newt finally said. “I guess you never told me you loved me, either.”

Then he Apparated.

Tina blinked at the air and spun.

“Newt!” She snapped. “Don’t you run away from this!” The man hadn’t run away from an Obscurus or a spirit storm, he sure as hell wasn’t running from her.

True, she hadn’t spoken the right words. Tina had a hard time with that anyway. When she found him, she rationalized as she headed towards the door to below decks, when she found him, she was going to keep him in place till she explained everything about how she felt. That of course she loved him, of course she wanted him, and of course she would just be happy being with him. He would listen. He had to.

She would fight for this, Tina realized, like she was fighting for her life.

She was nearly at the door when someone Disapparated behind her, and a hand closed over her shoulder. She spun, nearly going for her wand—then she saw Newt.

And all words left her mind.

He was kneeling on the damp, wooden deck. He had one hand in his breast pocket, the other outstretched from where he had stopped her. He took a deep, deep breath, then gazed up at her.

“I understand the confusion,” he said. “I forgot an important part in all this. The traditional part, where we’re both calm and aware of what we’re doing.”

He withdrew something from his breast pocket, something small and flashing. She didn’t even look at it. Her eyes were stuck on his face as her heart stopped.

Newt's outstretched hands shook. He kept his eyes on Tina, and she could see every fear, every insecurity there like little facets in an emerald. But above all that was love.

“Tina Goldstein,” Newt said. “I have nearly died for you a few times, and I have not regretted it. You’re honest, brilliant, compassionate, and...well there are a lot of admirable qualities. Dougal likes you for one, and Pickett, and they’re a bit tough to please. I could go on about more if you--”

"Newt," Tina whispered, her voice nearly gone. Newt swallowed and nodded and continued.

"There was that one time, Tina, when you said that you would want my book before I’d even written it. And you looked like you had so much faith in me, so much, that I nearly wanted to run away from you before you saw who I really was. Because I thought there wasn’t anything I could do to deserve that look in your eyes.”

“Newt...”

“So I have decided that you make me that better person,” Newt said in one breath. “And I love you very much. Will you marry me, Tina?”

Tina had to gather her thoughts to speak. The wind rippled his hair and coat, and she almost expected Pickett to appear from his pocket. She thought it said something about who she’d become
that she was disappointed Pickett was not playing witness.

She was going to cry, she realized distantly, and then she was smiling, and Newt was smiling back. No words were really necessary.

She just held out her hand.

Newt took her hand like it was fragile, precious, and slid the ring on. The band was sturdy, gold, and carved with leaves. The small round diamond flashed impossible bright in the last sun rays.

“Newt Scamander,” Tina said. “It just occurs to me that I have never told you this, but I love you too. Very much. And I plan to love you for a long time.”

“Oh good,” Newt replied.

Tina burst out laughing and with a pull had Newt on his feet. She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him, hard, joyously, and he held her tight and spun her around so her feet left the ground entirely. The stars came out, sharp and cheerful, but neither noticed.

They were together and close, and would stay that way, for a while.

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! Thank you so much for taking this journey with me. I know it was a lot longer and windier than most people expected (myself included) BUT I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

Thanks for the reads,
~lize

Works inspired by this one
Crossing Borders - sketches by Fennethianel

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!