

It was the first time Harry was in control of the wards of a magical place, much less a gigantic castle like Hogwarts. He had experience in erecting wards over Grimmulad Place with Sirius. That was the extent of his expertise in maintaining wards. But, those wards were later upgraded by Sirius, employing some professionals and tethering the wards to a proper wardstone. However, Harry didn't have the opportunity to study the intricacies behind such a method properly. He was keyed into the wards of Grimmulad Place, and to him, that was more than enough. He also didn't have much time to study the wardstone and how the wards were tethered or controlled because he was otherwise engaged. His focus tended to focus overtly on battle magic in the past, and right now, Harry was feeling the weight of responsibility on his shoulders.

The only reason he was not panicking was because he knew he had to stay strong and keep Hogwarts safe while the Founders handled the dragons. Failure was not an option when he was in charge of the fate of thirty wizarding families. Only ten wizards were capable of defending themselves out of those thirty families, which was a poor number. He had counted ninety-seven wizards and witches, including children, among the refugees. Out of such a staggering number of people, only ten were moderately powerful enough to defend themselves.

'It's no wonder why Muggles dominated the world.' Harry thought. 'Most wizards and witches have not even mastered fire.'

"They're guarding the entrances as you ordered, Lord Targaryen."

Harry eyed the man who updated him on the status of the wizards and witches assigned to guard the entrances and passageways inside the castle.

"Good. You can stay by my side, or you can stay with the families. It's your choice." said Harry.

"I'll stand by your side, my lord." Keith Doyle said.

Harry nodded before his attention shifted to the battlefield. The four Founders stood inside the protective barriers surrounding Hogwarts, facing the Goblin army.

"They'll triumph over the dragons, right?" Keith asked earnestly.

"You've known them far longer than I do. What do you think?" Harry turned the question around to the troubled-looking wizard.

“I’ve known Lord Salazar all my life. The Slytherins have guarded this land for generations. The other three came from afar with Lord Salazar after one of his many travels. Together, they’re the most powerful sorcerers this land has ever seen. But...” Keith trailed off

“But what?” Harry asked curiously.

“The Goblins – they’re powerful and cruel. They’re strong warriors with strange magic, and they burnt down our houses and villages. Even if we survive this war and return, we’ll be blamed by the muggles and hunted down as word spreads about us to other villages. Either we all die at the hands of the Goblins, or we get hunted by the muggles.” Keith said, his eyes downcast.

“Then band together and make yourself a new home close to Hogwarts. Your children can benefit from Hogwarts, and your families can build a safe haven for future generations of wizards and witches.”

“It’s not so easy, Lord Targaryen. How will we benefit from trade if we are not among the muggles? Who’ll give us access to gold and silver? Who’ll trust us when we sell our wares?”

“Nothing worth doing in life is ever easy. There will always be obstacles, no matter what you do. The strength of a people – a civilisation is not defined by how easily they succeeded but based on how much they endured together.” said Harry, disliking the attitude of wizards who always give up and hide away rather than face the world with their heads held high.

“It’s easy for you to say these things, my lord. Our families are not as strong as you or them,” said Keith, nodding at the Founders.

Harry turned his back to the battlefield as he stared at Keith. The wizard looked young, but the dishevelled black hair, unkempt black beard and the dark beneath his eyes made the man look far older.

“Do you think it’s magic that makes those four stand straight with their shoulders back as they stare down at the dragons and an entire army of bloodthirsty Goblins? No, it’s not. They know they can die any moment, but they stand because they have the resolve to assume the weight of responsibility on their shoulders.” said Harry, looking at the Founders.

“Once you assume responsibility, it weighs you down but also tethers you firmly to the ground. That’s why this huge army cannot make them move an inch backwards. They’ve planted their feet firmly on the ground and are ready

to take on all the challenges the world throws at them. The question is, are you ready to do the same?"

War horns blew across from the battlefield, making Harry take a deep breath.

"It begins." he muttered, staring at the flurry of activity behind the Goblin army lines.

The Goblin warriors unleashed a first salvo of attacks using their siege engines against the protective barriers surrounding Hogwarts. Harry felt every single bombardment in his bones as his magic made him aware of every single attack and its intensity. It was a feeling Harry was unfamiliar with so far, and it was slightly disconcerting to focus his attention on a singular matter or area in the battlefield as the Goblins attacked many places simultaneously.

Taking a deep breath, Harry closed his eyes and centred himself in his mind. Withdrawing his awareness gently, Harry managed to occlude his mind. The magic in his body, which had been acting restless till then because of the constant barrage of attacks, settled like a placid lake. When he opened his eyes, Harry felt slightly better with his magic settling down and not acting like he was about to get pulverised by the siege. With his mind firmly tucked behind a barrier, he could feel the wards with greater precision. The attacks on the barriers were like pinpricks, and he found he could reinforce the barrier with his own magic.

"This is... exhilarating!" Harry muttered, feeling like he was in multiple places simultaneously because of the wards.

He distinctly remembered that the wards surrounding Grimmauld Place had a vaguer stratum when it came to pinpointing the location of a breach. Those wards only gave a general idea of the direction of the breach and didn't distinguish whether it was a large or small breach. But the wards currently surrounding Hogwarts were far more sophisticated than what Harry was used to. It even challenged the notion that magic became far more versatile and sophisticated as time rolled by.

'Or Hogwarts still had wards like these but remained inactive because it had stopped facing sieges for centuries.' Harry mused.

Either way, Harry made a mental note to study the wards protecting Hogwarts. He had no doubt it'd come in handy in the future.

"I've always wondered why they keep attacking the topside of the barriers instead of the ground." Keith commented from his side.

"It's because all barriers are strong near the ground. The weakness of the magical barrier lies at the farthest point from the ground." Harry answered.

"But why?"

"Because the magic of a wizard alone does not fuel barriers. It absorbs magic from the earth to sustain itself. As you can guess, the farther it is from the ground, the weaker a barrier gets." Harry explained, watching more and more large rune-enforced boulders grind against the magical barriers protecting Hogwarts.

However, Harry noticed when the Goblins switched from bombarding the barrier with stones to long metal bolts. This time, the push against the barriers was far more powerful than the boulders.

'Shield breakers.' Harry thought with a frown.

The bolts impinging on the wards were somehow consecrated with magic meant for breaking shields.

'They might be enchanted bolts.' Harry thought.

After a couple of hits on the barrier, Harry felt holes opening up over some parts of the spherical barrier. He immediately poured more energy into the barrier to close up the holes, but more and more boulders and bolts started hitting the barrier. There was a concentrated barrage of attacks against the barrier, keeping Harry on edge as he strained to keep the protective barrier intact. Suddenly, Harry felt a large breach open on the barrier. He saw a half-burnt boulder breach through the barrier coming towards the castle. Before he could strike down the boulder, a bright flash of yellow energy struck it, shattering it into smithereens.

Harry was not surprised to see Salazar Slytherin with his serpent-headed staff raised high in the air.

‘Good to know a blasting curse would destroy these boulders despite their runes.’ Harry thought.

“Look! They are releasing the dragons.” Keith pointed out in alarm.

Sure enough, Harry saw the Goblins unchaining the dragons one by one. He was a little relieved to see no Hungarian Horntail among the four dragons. All four dragons looked native to the British Isles with their long, curvy horns on their heads and wide, expansive wings. Their tails were not thorny and looked rather plain. Two dragons had jet-black scales, while the other two had red and green scales adorning their bodies. For a moment, Harry thought the dragons would attack the Goblins as their bindings were released, but the beasts took to the skies carrying three goblin warriors on their necks, respectively.

‘How the fuck did these Goblins tame these dragons?’ Harry wondered.

“Wow!”

The sound coming from the back attracted Harry's attention as it was not Keith Doyle who spoke up. His instincts were not wrong as Harry's eyes met the wide brown eyes of a familiar boy he met earlier. It was none other than his new student – Carlan Flanagan.

“Boy! What're you doing here?” Keith thundered. “Why aren't you with the families?”

Harry couldn't be bothered to focus on the two wizards because the four dragons opened their maws and breathed bright, hot fire into the barrier. The outpouring of magic in the flames was tremendous, and Harry was forced to pull more magic into the barrier to maintain it. Harry braced himself for the next attack, and he knew what was to be expected. Confirming his worries, the dragons smashed into the weakened barrier with their heavily scaled bodies. The strain this time was far too great, and Harry couldn't replenish the barrier in a timely manner. The dragons clawed their way in, shearing off chunks from the barrier with their claws while thick scales protected their bodies.

Four blasts of energy struck the green dragon on its belly, blowing it away in one swoop. The dragon roared as it was blasted away from the barrier by the force of the spells. Even when Harry was far removed from the Founders, he could feel the preeminence of their magic. Especially when the four of them were together, it was like watching raw magic coming to the surface, shining like a bright star.

The green dragon tumbled down from the sky, falling face first on the barrier, crushing the Goblin warriors on its neck against the surface of the barrier. The armour the Goblin warriors wore didn't help them the least as they were cooked alive by the barrier and crushed to a pulp by the dragon's weight. The other three dragons managed to claw their way inside the barrier while the Founders were distracted, but not without suffering some damage. Harry had tried to rejuvenate the barriers as best as possible despite the dragons smashing several large holes. Their scales were sizzling with heat after they forced their way in. The mighty dragons let out terrifying roars that shook the castle to its core before they took flight in different directions. Two dragons went straight for the Founders, while the third dragon went straight for the castle.

'That's not good.' Harry thought, seeing the dragons split off.

Just as he feared, the two black-scaled dragons were enough of a distraction to keep the four Founders engaged. This left the red dragon free to do what it wanted, which meant Harry would've to fight it to keep Hogwarts safe.

"Oh, no. Not again." Harry muttered dejectedly, realising he was about to face a dragon in a straight battle.

Unlike last time, the battle would not end if he stole an egg. Strangely enough, he found himself missing the First Task of the Triwizard Tournament.

He cast a hopeful look at the Founders and found them wholly engaged in a fight with the two dragons. Helga Hufflepuff had a dragon ensnared in vines and thick wooden roots while Rowena bombarded the trapped dragon with spell after spell. Godric and Salazar, on the other hand, were forming rock golems to attack and defend against the dragon they were facing.

'No help from them.' Harry mused, keeping a wary eye on the red dragon as it drew closer towards the castle.

At this point, Harry had two choices. He could either focus on strengthening the barrier, which had weakened under the dragons' assault, or he could focus on the dragon that would undoubtedly burn Hogwarts to the ground. Either way, Harry saw no way to avoid a lot of damage on Hogwarts, but the dragon was far more threatening than the bombardment from the Goblin army in his eyes.

"Keith." Harry suddenly called the wizard standing by his side.

“My lord?”

“Can you use the blasting curse?” Harry asked.

“Yes, lord.”

“Good. Hogwarts will be facing bombardment from the Goblins. Try to destroy as many attacks as you can with the blasting curse from this tower.” Harry ordered before jumping on the parapet of the tower.

“Also, keep the boy close.” Harry added as his eyes fell on Carlan. “It’ll be dangerous for him to go back now. I’ll shield the tower from any attacks.”

Harry placed a runestone on the tower and charged it with his magic. A shield made of blue energy encompassed the tower partially. The runestone was a work in progress, and it showed by the incomplete shield surrounding the tower. But for the time being, it was an adequate shield for the situation they were facing. He had been hoping to complete it and use it to protect Potter Manor from Voldemort’s attack in the future.

With that done, Harry jumped out of the tower, assuming his spirit form. His body transformed into sparkling silver smoke as he streaked across the early morning sky straight for the red dragon.

‘That should look so cool.’ Harry thought giddily.

Harry couldn’t help but feel the rush of battle despite the massive dragon heading his way. More than fear, he was excited at the prospect of an air battle against a dragon. The worries he had been having while standing inside the tower fled as Harry streaked across the sky at full speed. The red dragon had undoubtedly picked out Harry’s arrival and considered him a threat because once Harry climbed straight up to the clouds, the dragon followed him instead of attacking Hogwarts.

“Okay. You got the dragon’s attention, Potter.” Harry muttered.

Several whistling sounds reached his ears, and Harry was forced to do several acrobatic twists and turns while flying to evade a rain of arrows. Looking back, Harry saw the Goblins strapped to the harness on the dragon’s back were the culprits.

‘Okay. New plan. Kill the little buggers on the dragon’s back before dealing with the dragon.’ Harry decided.

With that thought in mind, Harry twisted and turned in mid-air, forcing the dragon through hard turns while evading the arrows from the Goblins until suddenly, he disappeared into a cloud. When the dragon came soaring in, Harry expertly hid himself on the underside of the dragon's belly. The dragon flew aimlessly, searching for Harry until it slowed down a little after finding nothing but white clouds and a blue sky around it. After ensuring the dragon was sufficiently distracted, Harry emerged from beneath it in haste from its tail end. The Goblins were wide open before Harry's eyes, and he didn't waste the opportunity to kill all three.

"Torrens incendio."

A blast of red-hot fire shot out of the tip of his wand, consuming the three Goblins. The flames cooked the Goblins in their armour while also burning away the bindings of the harness they were using. The Goblins, consumed by his spell, fell from the dragon's back with the harness slipping away. Their tale of suffering ended abruptly when the red dragon promptly snapped its jaws around the burning goblins in mid-air. The sickening crunch as the dragon munched on the bones of the Goblins made Harry flinch. It was all the more intimidating because the dragon stared at Harry with its large yellow eyes while enjoying the fried Goblins for breakfast. Gales of wind brushed past Harry as the dragon remained suspended in the air, its wings flapping in the sky to stay afloat. Even though he was a bit intimidated by the dragon, Harry felt like trying his luck in suspending hostilities with the red dragon.

"\$\$ I mean you no harm, great dragon. I'll help you to get free from the Goblins. \$\$" Harry hissed in parseltongue.

The dragon paused its chewing and roared at him.

'Oh yeah. I should've tried French.' Harry thought sardonically.

Harry turned mid-air and flew away with the red dragon hot on his tail. He twisted and turned, tried going high and low, tried all sorts of manoeuvres, but the dragon was unwilling to leave him be.

"Oh, come on, you blasted dragon. Why don't you just fly away?" Harry screamed.

The dragon answered with a roar, and it tried to roast him alive with dragon fire. But Harry evaded it by plunging into a steep dive. Startling Harry, his ears picked up on the painful whimper of the dragon, making him look up. He saw

the dragon going into a free fall with a shower of stone along with its massive body.

‘One of those stone boulders must have hit the dragon.’ Harry thought.

Harry also noticed that one of the dragon’s wings was twisted at an odd angle. The dragon desperately tried to beat its other wing as it spiralled towards the ground. The dragon made pitiful sounds all the way, and Harry, who heard these sounds, found it to be a desperate cry for help from a creature that was staring death at its face.

“Oh, what the hell.” Harry muttered, chasing after the dragon on instinct.

The logical side of his mind kept saying that he should leave the dragon to fall to its death or even get gravely injured. After all, the fall would keep the dragon out of the war and make it easy to kill. On the other hand, another voice in his head was urging him to save the dragon. For reasons beyond his understanding, Harry found himself heeding the latter voice. Streaking past the dragon in his spirit form, Harry fired off several cushioning charms on the ground before conjuring a giant rubber bed. The dragon smashed into the rubber bed with full force but suffered no further injuries.

Harry kept a wary eye on the dragon as it slowly moved out of the rubber bed he conjured and into the ground. It let out pitiful sounds while licking its injured wing. Harry even saw tears leaking from the dragon’s eyes, making him feel sorry for the magnificent creature.

“I offered you peace. We could’ve parted on good terms.” Harry said to the dragon, only to receive more pitiful groans and screeching from the dragon while he materialised in his physical form on the ground.

The dragon made a fearful noise in the back of its throat as it backpedalled on the ground, seeing several streaks of burning boulders coming its way.

“Tonitruum Fulminata.”

The white lightning that blasted out of the tip of his wand split off and struck down all the boulders within the blink of an eye. The boulders exploded into a shower of pebbles.

“All right. As for you...” Harry said, pointing his wand at the dragon, making it backpedal more. “You’ll behave and harm no one.”

The dragon folded in on itself and stayed unmoving on the ground while observing him. Noticing that the dragon was not acting hostile, Harry focused on the barrier surrounding Hogwarts. Raising his wand, Harry shot raw magic into the barrier. Steadily but surely, the barrier started to recover, blocking out the siege weapons of the Goblins once again. The holes that were clawed open by the dragons sealed themselves shut.

“Okay. That’s dealt with.” Harry let out a relieved sigh once the barrier was back in place.

Other than some minor damage, Hogwarts was mostly standing intact, and he could see the tower he had left Carlan and Keyth was standing strong without suffering any damage to its structure.

“Now, let’s see how the Founders are fairing.”