

## Chapter 33

Harry's stomach sank as he stared at Dorea's pale but determined face.

"I'm on my way," he told her, turning and making his way to the office as the girls rushed over to join him. "I can be there in about a minute."

"We're alright," Dorea said. "The wards are holding him back for now."

"I'll head back to the office and alert the Aurors," David added over Harry's shoulder.

"I'll be there soon," Harry said firmly.

Nodding gratefully, Dorea cut the connection. Her face had barely faded away before Harry was making another call.

"Alastor Moody," he said.

There was a brief pause before Moody's face swam into view.

"Potter," he grumbled.

"Voldemort is attacking Potter Manor," Harry said quickly.

"Shite," Moody cursed, the background moving as he got to his feet. "I'm on it."

“Thanks,” Harry said.

Cutting the connection, he stuffed the mirror in his pocket and started to jog to the office.

“We’re coming with you,” Lily said with a tone of finality.

Harry sighed, knowing there was nothing he could do to change her mind.

“Alright,” he replied, then pointed at her, Narcissa, and Bellatrix. “But you three stick together and watch each other’s backs.”

They nodded in unison as they entered the office. Harry headed straight for the two Any Mirrors hanging on either side of the fireplace. Meanwhile, David took a vase from the mantle and grabbed a handful of Floo Powder.

“I’ll let you know what we’re facing once I get there,” Harry told him.

“And I’ll start gathering Aurors,” David said. “Ministry Auror Offices!”

Turning, he threw a handful of powder into the fireplace, turning the orange flames a bright green. As he stepped into the fire and vanished, Harry pressed the tip of his wand to the mirror’s surface.

“Potter Manor,” he said.

Without pause, he stepped through into the Potter family living room. Immediately, dull, distant thuds could be heard through the house as powerful and destructive magic assaulted the wards. Harry could feel the air shudder each time the ancient, protective magic shouldered an attack. Across the room, Dorea, Charlus, Sirius, and James stood at the window, gazing outwards while clutching their wands.

“How much longer can those wards last?” Harry asked as the girls walked through the mirror behind him.

Charlus turned to look at him with a grim expression, his face seeming to have aged a decade since the last time Harry had seen him.

“A few more minutes,” he replied. “But right now, that’s the least of my worries.”

Furrowing his brow, Harry made his way over to the window. His eyes widened when he got a look at what they were facing. Assaulting the wards was a small army of Death Eaters. Not nearly as many as he’d seen at the Battle of Hogwarts, but there had to be at least fifty cloaked and masked figures with their wands raised, casting in unison.

“We need to leave,” Harry said. “Go pack your things and-”

“We’re not leaving,” Charlus interrupted softly but firmly.

“We can’t fight this many!” Harry yelled incredulously. “If it was just Death Eaters, maybe. But with Voldemort here...”

“Harry,” Dorea said, stepping beside Charlus and resting her hand on his arm. “This house has stood on these grounds for more than a thousand years. Losing Potter Manor would mean a lot more than just losing our home. It would be losing a symbol that has stood against the dark for centuries. Leaving without a fight isn’t an option.”

"You'll die!" Harry shouted.

"Then we'll die defending our home," Charlus replied calmly. "Take James and go back to the Den. We'll hold them off as long as we can. Maybe if the Aurors get here in time..."

Turning to Dorea, they shared a meaningful look and nodded.

"I can't leave you here to fight them alone!" James yelled.

"I'm staying, too," Sirius added.

"You can and you will," Charlus told him firmly. "Our family must survive, even if we don't."

"Enough!" Harry shouted angrily. "Fine! You want to stay, we're staying. Find the most secure room in the house and start setting up defenses. Force them to come through a doorway so you don't have to fight them all at once. Do *not* hold back. They set foot in this house; they're taking their lives into their own hands. And take the mirror with you. We don't want the Aurors to step out in the middle of a bunch of Death Eaters."

"Harry-" Charlus started.

"No," Harry cut him off. "You want to fight, then we all fight."

Charlus smiled, "I was going to say thank you."

“Oh,” Harry said, blinking. “You can thank me when we get out of this alive. There’s a balcony upstairs, right?”

“Yes, at the back of the library,” Charlus said, looking at him curiously. “Why?”

“I have an idea to take some of them out before they get to the house,” Harry said. “I’ll take out as many as I can, but I need to hold off Voldemort and...”

“We understand,” Dorea said, stepping forward to pull him into a gentle hug.

Closing his eyes, Harry held her tightly for a long moment before stepping back and pushing her away.

“Go get ready. We don’t have a lot of time,” he said.

Nodding, she turned with Charlus and started to lead James and the girls deeper into the house. Before Bellatrix could follow, Harry grabbed her arm and held her back.

“If things start to look bad, get them out of here,” Harry whispered. “I don’t care if you have to stun them yourself. Just get them out.”

Bellatrix nodded, her violet eyes glinting determinedly as she left to catch up with the group.

“My office is part of the original castle,” Charlus said as he walked away. “That would be the best room to hole up in.”

Sighing, Harry took out his mirror and called David as he began to climb the stairs.

“Harry,” David said over a rumble of loud voices in the background. “What’s happening?”

“Voldemort and fifty Death Eaters are trying to get through the wards at Potter Manor,” he told him. “Charlus thinks we have a few minutes before they get through.”

“Shit,” David cursed. “Can you get them out?”

“I tried. They won’t leave,” Harry said frustratedly. “I had to tell Bella to stun them and drag them through the mirror if it gets bad. They put the mirror in Charlus’ office, so you’ll have a safe place to enter.”

“Alright, good,” David nodded. “I’ll send in a small team to help while the bulk of the Aurors attack them from behind. Hopefully, this will go like it normally does, and they’ll run at the first sign of resistance.”

“Not with Voldemort here,” Harry said, shaking his head just as he stepped into the library. “He’s here to prove a point. He wants people to fear him. Running would make him look weak. I bet the werewolf attack was designed to distract us from learning about this attack until it was too late.”

“Let’s hope you’re wrong,” David said.

Pausing, he turned to talk to someone Harry couldn’t see before turning back a few seconds later.

“I’ve sent Moody and his team to the Den. They should be there soon to back you up,” he said.

“Why the Den?” Harry asked.

“Crouch sent the mirror you gave us to the Unspeakables,” David said unhappily. “Said he wanted to make sure it was secure before we used it.”

“That son of a bitch,” Harry growled. “I’ll deal with him later. How long until you and the rest of the Aurors can get here?”

“Can you give me fifteen minutes?” he asked. “I want to make sure we have the numbers on our side.”

“I’ll try,” Harry replied.

When he reached the back of the library, he threw open the double doors to the balcony and looked out over the moonlit lawn. He estimated there to be about a hundred and fifty yards between the house and the edge of the wards. There was a long, straight driveway made of gravel that cut through the grass like a river, leading to a large, ornate wrought iron gate. Two tall bushes trimmed into the shape of Griffins stood out on the otherwise empty lawn.

Pulling out the Elder Wand, Harry turned the tip skyward and sent off a bright blue spell. The Death Eaters paused for a moment as they watched it streak into the clouds. At the back of the crowd, Voldemort glared at him with his bright red eyes as grey clouds gathered above. Waving his wand, Harry animated the bushes. They ripped their feet from the ground and paced in front of the gate, cawing menacingly at the intruders.

A bark from Voldemort spurred his Death Eaters into resuming their attack on the wards. Just as Harry spun around and reentered the library, there was a rumble of thunder. He barely got back under the cover of the roof before rain began to pour heavily from the sky. He made his way back downstairs quickly, past the kitchen, and into Charlus’ office.

The girls were transfiguring a couch into stone while Charlus, Sirius, and James moved the bookshelves away from the wall. Impressively, Charlus transfigured them not into stone but into iron, a much more difficult spell for such a large object. At the back of the room, Dorea set about casting some impressive protective Charms over everything. They probably wouldn't last long without being renewed, but they would help.

"How are the wards?" Harry asked.

"They won't hold much longer," Charlus answered, wiping his brow. "A couple of minutes. Maybe a little longer."

"Alright," Harry nodded. "I'm going to wait outside, and then I want you to drop the wards right before they break."

"What? Why?" Charlus asked.

"Voldemort won't be expecting it," Harry replied. "It'll make him pause. Besides, we might be able to use them later. I think that's worth more than another minute of protection."

"Okay," Charlus nodded. "What about the Aurors?"

"Moody is on his way with a team to help you hold off anyone that gets inside," Harry told him. "David said he needs us to buy him fifteen minutes to get the rest together."

"That seems like an awfully long time," Dorea said.

"I know," Harry sighed, running a hand through his hair.



Taking his mirror out of his pocket, he walked over to the back wall and stuck it to the stone.

"You still there, David?" Harry asked.

"I'm here!" David yelled a moment before he stepped back into the frame. "What is it?"

"I'm going to leave this connected so you can see what's happening," Harry told him.

"I'll keep an eye on it," David nodded. "Hold them off as long as you can, but if you need us early, we'll be there."

"Thank you," Charlus said sincerely.

Just as Harry turned to leave, Lily, Narcissa, and Bellatrix stepped in front of him.

"Please, be careful," Lily said pleadingly.

"I will," Harry said, pulling her close. "Remember what I said. You three look out for each other."

"You just make sure to come back to us in one piece," Narcissa told him as she took her turn giving him a hug.

"Give 'em hell," Bellatrix grinned.

Harry snorted and grinned as he gave her a hug.

“I told Lily and Cissy,” she whispered in his ear. “We’ll get them out.”

“Thank you,” Harry whispered back.

Kissing her cheek, he stepped back and gave them the most confident grin he could before turning and leaving the room. Just as he stepped outside the door, he heard Charlus greet Moody. Hearing the old man’s voice helped soothe some of his fear as he approached the front door. Harry paused and took a deep breath before yanking the door open and stepping out onto the front porch.

The rain pounded down on the granite tiles covering the roof. It was so heavy that Harry could barely see the Death Eaters in the distance. Only the light from their spells gave them away. Running his finger along the shaft of his wand, all he could do was wait for Charlus to lower the wards.

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“Moody,” Charlus smiled, shaking the man’s hand and clapping him on the shoulder. “Thank Merlin, you’re here.”

“Wouldn’t miss it,” Moody said as Connie, Jenna, and Greyson stepped out of the mirror behind him.

“Talk about Déjà vu, eh?” Jenna said, grinning at Connie.

“Yeah, but this time we have more people, we’re better prepared, and Harry’s already here,” Connie pointed out. “Where is he, anyway?”

“Outside,” Charlus replied. “He’s going to be dealing with Voldemort. He’ll take out as many Death Eaters as he can, but I expect we’ll have our hands full in here.”

“Maybe we’ll get lucky this time, and Harry’ll kill the bastard,” Greyson said.

“Don’t get your hopes up,” Moody muttered. “Let’s get to work. I wanted this room covered in Fire Suppression Charms. Move a couple of those bookcases against that corner, so Dorea has a place to treat the injured if we need to. How long do we have?”

“Not long,” Charlus said. “The wards will only hold for a couple of more minutes, and then however long it takes them to get past Harry.”

“Alright, I’m going to go set a few surprises for our guests,” Moody smirked.

“I’m going to go grab my bag,” Dorea said, following after him.

“Don’t take too long,” Charlus warned.

Dorea gave him a reassuring smile, “I’ll only be a minute. It’s just in the kitchen.”

Following Alastor out of the room, she walked to the kitchen, where her blue Healers bag sat on the counter. She opened it to check the contents and then opened the cupboards above it to stock it with any potions she might need. Out of the corner of her eye, she watched as Alastor started Charming and Hexing everything in sight. A broom, a house plant, a pair of Wellingtons, even the coat rack.

When she finished stocking her bag, Dorea smirked to herself and started helping him. As Moody made his way back to the kitchen, he paused and watched as she Hexed the knives, sink, drawers, and the cupboards that held her potions ingredients.

“Now that’s just evil,” Moody grinned. “I knew Charlus did right by marrying you.”

“Why thank you, Alastor,” Dorea smiled. “It’s good to know an old witch like me can still impress.”

Moody chuckled, and they got back to work, Moody’s creativity and Dorea’s deviousness working in perfect harmony.

“It’s time!” Charlus yelled, poking his head out of the office. “I’ll need to drop the wards any minute.”

“Coming,” Dorea said, grabbing her bag.

She and Alastor rejoined him in the office. A small amount of relief washed over her when she spotted Connie getting the kids in position. She’d moved them off to the side where they could still help, but they would be out of the direct line of fire.

“Narcissa,” Connie said, grabbing the girl by the shoulders and guiding her to stand near the wall. “You stay here. If anything pokes through that doorway, you cut it off. Got it?”

“Gladly,” Narcissa replied fiercely.

Nodding, Connie walked back over to Dorea and Moody.

“Thank Merlin, Harry has those girls on our side,” she muttered.

“Ready?” Charlus asked.

“Do it,” Moody nodded.

Taking Charlus’ hand in hers, they shared a meaningful look before he raised his wand and dropped the battered and weakened wards.

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Harry felt the ancient magic protecting his family’s home shudder as it was battered with the equivalent of a magical sledgehammer. He could feel the magic starting to give and strain under the repeated abuse. If Charlus didn’t take them down soon, a single spell from Voldemort could shatter them.

Just as the thought occurred to him, he felt the wards lower, and the Death Eaters paused in surprise. Those at the front backed up nervously as the glowing yellow dome began to collapse smoothly into the ground. Even when the wards were fully down, no one moved. Although Harry couldn’t see Voldemort through the rain, he could imagine the confused and angry frown on his face.

Smirking to himself, he stepped off of the porch and onto the gravel drive. A protective dome appeared around him, blocking the rain from hitting him and even pushing the water on the ground away from his feet. Harry remained bone dry as he marched steadily forward, the gravel crunching with every step. Halfway down the drive, he was finally able to see the nervous, frightened gazes of the Death Eaters and the concerned, angry glare of Voldemort’s inhuman red eyes. Raising his wand, a blue bolt of magic slammed into the wrought iron gate like a battering ram, twisting and warping the heavy metal like it was a child’s toy.

“Kill him!” Voldemort hissed, his voice being magically carried over the pounding of the rain.

Fifty voices screamed in unison as the Death Eaters charged forward. Concealed by the rain and their natural camouflage and forgotten in the confusion of the wards being lowered, they forgot about the Griffins. The animated topiaries mauled a few of the black-cloaked figures, pummeling them into the sodden soil as they rushed past. A few of their comrades paused to fight back. The first spells they used passed harmlessly through their leafy bodies, resulting in two more Death Eaters being pummeled by their surprisingly powerful hooves, claws, and wings.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for someone to wizen up and use a wide Cutting Charm. In moments, the beautifully sculpted and expertly animated bushes lay in unrecognizable piles. Strewn on the ground around them lay the bodies of the half dozen Death Eaters they'd managed to defeat.

The horde of masked witches and wizards continued to run toward Harry, weighted down and slowed by their heavy, saturated cloaks. Several fired curses as they ran, but they were easily stopped by the shield around him or blocked by levitated and enlarged stones from the drive.

Harry slashed his wand across his body, causing those in the front to raise shields, but no spell came. Only a sweet, pungent odor filled the air. Looking past the approaching mass of bodies, he met Voldemort's gaze. His pale nose wrinkled, and his eyes widened as realization hit. He opened his mouth to speak, but it was too late. A ball of flame had already left Harry's wand.

As the snitch-sized ball of orange flames traveled through the air, it ignited the raindrops he'd transfigured into petrol. The Death Eater at the front that he'd aimed the spell at sneered in contempt and slapped the spell away. The moment the tiny ball hit the ground, the man and a dozen people around him were engulfed in an explosion of flames.

Screams of pain and fear rent the air as the explosion died, but the flames continued to spread. It traveled across the ground rapidly, lapping at their feet and igniting their robes. The rain was so heavy that the flames jumped from drop to drop, engulfing the very air around them in flames. Around Harry, the flaming drops fell harmlessly around his shield, creating a dome of fire in the middle of the growing inferno. The smell of burned clothes and charred flesh filled the air as the Death Eaters tried desperately to put themselves out. Shouts of water spells could be heard amongst them, and a few of the more desperate ones tried to roll around in what water remained on the ground.

On the other side of the ruined wrought iron gate, Voldemort seethed. Whipping his wand around in a circle above his head, the fire rose into the air and began to swirl. Slowly, it coalesced into a fiery tornado.

The Death Eaters, now able to put themselves out, started to crawl away and nurse their wounds. Their burns, while painful and debilitating, weren't likely to be fatal. Some even had the courage to Disapparate while most just tried to get to a safe distance to nurse their wounds and stare in awe at the magic of the Dark Lord.

Harry knew that their fight was over for the night, but his was just beginning. With a swipe of his wand, he canceled his transfiguration. The flames were snuffed out in an instant. He had no interest in experiencing the pain he'd inflicted for himself. Now, however, he had a twisting cyclone of water to deal with.

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At the back of the Potter property, hidden out of sight, another group of fifty Death Eaters emerged from the tree line the moment the wards dropped.

"What the hell?" one asked warily. "That's not supposed to happen."

"It doesn't matter," a witch barked, striding past him. "The Dark Lord ordered us to attack as soon as the wards came down, and they're down. Let's go!"

The wizard scowled and shared a nervous glance with the Death Eaters near him. Hesitantly, they followed the woman through the backyard. She strode forward with purposeful, confident strides while those following her crept softly, sticking close to the shadows and close to the hedges.

“Will you lot stop acting like cowards,” she hissed. “They’ll be too busy worrying about the attack out front to even realize we’re coming. Now hurry up! I don’t want to miss the action.”

Spinning on her heel, the woman picked up the pace and strode toward the back door. Sharing another cautious glance, the Death Eaters following her sped up to catch up with her.

“Avery’s going to get us killed,” one wizard whispered to another. “The Potters aren’t to be taken lightly.”

“We’ll let her go in first,” the other whispered back. “If we’re lucky, she’ll get herself offed and then we can take charge.”

“Brilliant,” the first Death Eater replied, grinning under his mask.

“Yaxley, Gibbon, will you two shut it before you get us caught?” A large, burly wizard asked.

“Fuck off, Goyle,” Yaxley replied.

Despite his words, Yaxley fell silent as they reached the back door.

“Let’s go,” Avery said, brandishing her wand and aiming it at the doorknob. “Alohomora.”

Instead of hearing the click of the lock as they expected, the doorknob shot forward with shocking speed and hit Avery in the gut. The Death Eaters heard the wind being knocked from her lungs as she was thrown back onto the ground. A moment later, the doorknob retracted back into place.



"I told you," Gibbon said, snickering under his breath.

He stopped when Avery climbed back to her feet while holding her stomach and glared at him dangerously. Holding up her wand, he stumbled back a step, but she merely spun around and blasted away the doorknob.

"So much for doing this quietly," Yaxley muttered.

"Shut it!" Avery barked over her shoulder.

Straightening her shoulders, she strode forward and kicked the door inwards. Looking around cautiously, she stepped inside... only for the door to slam shut, hitting her in the face. A few people behind her as they heard her nose crunch under her mask.

"Son of a bitch," Avery cursed.

She ripped off her mask, revealing an attractive, if bloodied, face underneath. Her brown eyes glinted furiously while she spit out the blood that had dripped from her nose onto her lip. With a snarl, she extended her wand at the door. It gave a shudder before it was ripped from its hinges. A negligent flick sent it to the side, where it landed in a bush.

"Goyle, you take point," Avery barked.

Grunting in response, Goyle shouldered his way past Yaxley and Gibbon. Cautiously, the large man stepped inside the house and paused. He waited for a few seconds, but nothing happened. With another grunt, he took a step forward.

The small house plant sitting on the shelf came to life and wrapped its thin vines around his neck. Goyle gurgled as he tried to free himself in a panic, the pot swinging dangerously behind him, nearly hitting another Death Eater who tried to help him.

“Crabbe, get it off of him!” Avery shouted.

“I’m trying,” Crabbe grunted.

Grabbing the vines, he started tearing them apart with his bare hands. Goyle continued to panic, forcing his friend to follow his movements. Unknowingly, his toe nudged a pair of Wellingtons sitting on the floor.

Crabbe gripped the pot and ripped it away from Goyle, allowing him to gasp in a desperate breath. He had only a moment to celebrate his success when a bright yellow rubber boot jumped into the air and covered his face. As he reached up and tried to pull it off, the other reared back and began kicking him in the shins.

“I can’t get it off!” Crabbe shouted, his voice muffled by the boot.

While he stumbled blindly about the small entryway, bumping into walls, Goyle rubbed his throat and pulled out his wand.

“Release-“

Goyle’s incantation was interrupted when the coat hanger came to life. One of the rounded brass hooks extended forwards and hit him on the side of the head. Wincing in pain, he turned, only to get hit on the forehead by a second. The third hit his right eye, causing him to howl in pain and collapse to the floor.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” Avery growled.

Whipping her wand up, she destroyed the coat rack and freed Crabbe from the boot over his head. The one on the floor continued to jump up and kick him in the shins until he picked it up and threw it furiously into the kitchen. It made it halfway across the room before coming to a stop in mid-air, turning around, and shooting back towards him. Crabbe fumbled with his wand and just got it clear of his robes when the heel impacted his groin. Yaxley and Gibbon winced in sympathy as the large man collapsed to his knees with a whimper.

“Get up, you stupid lump!” Avery barked.

Again, her wand whipped forward, destroying the boot.

“Useless,” Avery hissed, her blonde hair falling around her face as she spun around. “Yaxley, you’re up.”

Shooting her a glare, Yaxley cast a protective shield around himself before stepping into the kitchen. Almost immediately, the knives leapt from the knife block and shot toward him. Even as they were stopped by his shield, he couldn’t help but flinch back reflexively. Glancing back at Yaxley, she rolled her eyes impatiently and made a shooing motion with her hands. With a huff, Yaxley turned back around and took a deep breath.

Taking a step forward, one of the cupboards close to the floor opened. Pots and pans spilled out onto the floor, clattering loudly as they banged against his shield. Distracted, he never noticed one of the cupboards next to his head opening slowly. Inside, a vial filled with a purple liquid hopped to the edge of the cupboard and jumped. Yaxley turned at the sound of breaking glass and watched as a pink smoke passed right through his shield. Too late to realize his mistake, he inhaled.

Turning to Avery, he muttered, “Shit.”

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“That’ll be the pots and pans,” Moody said as they listened to the chaos. “I think the knives missed.”

“Shit,” they heard, followed by a thud.

“What was that?” Sirius asked eagerly.

Moody shrugged.

“That was mine,” Dorea smiled. “I charmed the left-over potions ingredients to attack. From the lack of vomiting, I’d say that was the Red Cap blood. They might want to get him out of there soon. Overexposure to the vapors has been known to cause pustules to grow all over the body.”

Turning to Charlus, she smirked, “I do hope they get to him in time.”

James and Sirius exchanged astonished looks. Before either of them could comment, they all heard screams from the front of the house. Everyone, including the Death Eaters, froze at the sound.

“What was that?” one of the Death Eaters asked.

“Sounds like Potter just dealt with your friends out front!” Moody shouted with a grin. “Might as well go home now. Your Dark Lord isn’t going to be coming to save you!”

“The only ones that need saving are you, Moody!” Avery spat. “You’ll pay for what you did to my father!”

“They’ll be here soon,” Moody grunted. “Those traps won’t hold them off for much longer.”

“How much longer, David?” Charlus asked, looking back at the mirror.

“We’re almost ready,” David replied. “Five more minutes.”

“We can hold out that long,” Charlus nodded.

“ARGHH!” Avery shouted.

There was an explosion followed by the sound of broken glass, wood, and metal clattering to the floor.

“Oh, that bitch is going to pay for destroying my kitchen,” Dorea hissed angrily.

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Harry batted aside a writhing, orange, Crushing Curse, nearly taking out a cowering Death eater. Levitating dozens of stones in front of him, he hurled them like bullets at Voldemort. A shield appeared just in time, crushing them into dust.

Suddenly, a scream from the house distracted him. A hissing, crackling red Pulverizing Hex emerged from the dust surrounding the Dark Lord. Harry only just got a shield up in time but still stumbled from the force of the spell.

Voldemort laughed as he swept aside the dust and stepped forward, a vindictive grin on his face.

“You can’t save them all, Harry,” he said.

Harry scowled and unleashed a flurry of curses. It drove him mad that he had no way of knowing what was happening inside. All he could do was focus on his part and hope for the best.

*Just a few more minutes,* he told himself.