

of their friendship to get used to.

Ginny arrived partway through dinner, squeezing her way onto the bench beside Neville and greeting them all cheerfully. Several feet behind her, much less cheerful, were Ron and Hermione — they sat far up the other end of the long table, shooting the occasional glare Harry's way but mostly pretending he didn't exist.

Not for the first time, Harry thought Charlie's little outburst at the Burrow might have been a blessing in disguise; now everyone knew that he wasn't an oblivious little idiot, he might finally get some peace from their heavy-handed attempts at burying the hatchet.

As Harry reached for the water jug, a sudden hush descended over the students around him. "Mr Malfoy." Harry jumped — Snape had appeared, staring down his hooked nose at the pair of them, his cold gaze fixed pointedly on Draco's hand on Harry's back. "Ten points from Slytherin. For conduct unbecoming of your house."

He kept walking, robes billowing behind him. Even though they both knew it was coming, Harry still felt Draco flinch minutely.

Snape had to do it, had to publicly disapprove of them now they had drawn such a blatant line in the sand. His reputation depended on it.

But for him to take points from his own house, in front of the entire *school*... he'd as good as said Draco was no longer a Slytherin in his eyes. Harry's heart clenched in sympathy as his boyfriend's eyes dulled, his shoulders hunching ever so slightly. "You okay?" he asked softly, brushing a butterfly-light kiss across his cheek. Draco nodded, jaw clenched.

"Fine. It's fine."

Still, he hardly touched the remainder of their dinner.

Even when Draco and Harry had been publicly friends, there was still some kind of hope among the genuine Voldemort supporters that he could be swayed around. They treated him with respect, in case he did come back to their side. Snape was neutral with him. All that would change, now.

Draco would handle it. He was strong. But that didn't mean Harry had to like it.

They stuck around until the hall started to clear out, though all their friends could tell their hearts weren't really in the conversation anymore. On the way out, Harry paused in the Entrance Hall, tugging Draco into a firm kiss. He could feel eyes on him, but he didn't care — he didn't want Draco going to bed sad. "I'll see you in the morning," he murmured, trying desperately not to blush, knowing everyone could hear him. "I love you." He wasn't ashamed of it. He wasn't going to hide his feelings anymore.

That earned a flicker of a genuine smile. "Sap," Draco accused, squeezing his hand. "I love you. Don't forget to finish that Transfiguration essay tonight."