

“Vat is it you say here? There are other fish in the sea?” Viktor said, shrugging. “I am young, there is time.”

Harry hoped Viktor found someone who truly deserved the strong, incredible man that hid behind the awkward, surly exterior.

The other Durmstrang students called out to their stragglers, and Viktor clapped Harry on the shoulder once more before following, falling into stride beside Boris as they returned to their ship. Soon after, Madame Maxime gathered her students, and they too were headed home. Harry grabbed his trunk and headed towards the doors, joining Neville and Ginny in waiting for the carriages. The twins joined them soon after, George’s hair mussed in a way that made Harry snicker.

“Shut it, Potter,” George said good-naturedly, elbowing Harry in the side. “I’ve seen you look worse.”

The carriages began to arrive, and Harry stifled a grimace when they ended up sharing one with Ron and Hermione. It was inevitable, when he was with the rest of the Weasleys, but he wished it wouldn’t happen. He didn’t know what to say to either of them — would they let him just back out of the friendship without issue, or were they still trying to keep hold of him on Dumbledore’s orders? He felt like they would have already tried to make amends — again — if they wanted to continue being his friends over the summer. Perhaps they recognised a lost cause, at last. Or they just assumed Harry would be thrown in with them whenever Dumbledore decided what to do with him. As if he would go passively into anything like that.

But he couldn’t make any moves until he had talked over his options with Sirius and Remus and Snape. He was playing a very dangerous game.

The seven of them ended up in a train compartment together, though conversation was stilted at best. Harry spent the whole journey looking for an opportunity to get the twins alone, but it didn’t happen until the very end, when they were the last ones out of the compartment at King’s Cross. “Hey, wait,” Harry urged, grabbing George by the arm. He shut the door quickly, raising a privacy ward. School wasn’t over yet. “I need your help with something.”

He explained his predicament, and the twins’ faces grew contemplative. “We’ll figure something out,” Fred promised. “Can’t leave you with those muggles all summer.”

“Could be a good one to add to our product line,” George agreed, grinning. “I get the feeling you’re not the only one who might need a decoy, these days.”

All of a sudden, Harry had the most brilliant idea he’d had in a long time.

He threw his trunk open and reached inside, grabbing the sack of galleons he’d thrown in there. He held it out to George. “Take this,” he insisted. Both twins stared at him incredulously.

“Harry, mate...”