

stomach still soured; it might be Dumbledore's instruction, but their obliviousness to Harry's emotional state was all them.

"Thank you for checking, sir. I appreciate it."

Snape nodded. "I took the liberty of checking the other Weasley children — they, too, are clear. The headmaster evidently does not see them as a threat to his control over you."

Now that was good news, relief rising in Harry. "Hopefully it stays that way." So far, only Remus and Sirius had been enchanted in any way, other than Harry himself. The two people who were most likely to take Harry out of Dumbledore's clutches.

"Keep a keen eye on those close to you — if you believe their behaviour to be suspect, tell me and I shall test them," Snape assured. "We have come too far to let carelessness be our downfall."

The prospect made Harry feel sick; if Dumbledore got suspicious of any of the heirs, it would only take a few well-placed compulsions and perhaps some truth serum to have all of Harry's work destroyed.

"We'll all be vigilant," he promised.

Satisfied, Snape nodded, then turned to Remus. "Do you need anything further, or can we go?"

"You go, I'll be over in a few." Remus ran a gentle hand down Snape's arm, giving him a look that Harry couldn't begin to decipher. Snape merely nodded, and disappeared.

"Is everything alright?" Harry asked, eyeing the werewolf hesitantly. Why would Remus need to stay behind?

"You tell me," Remus returned. "Those digs about the Defence professor weren't just to rile up Severus."

Remorse flooded Harry's gut. "You know I wasn't talking about you, right?" he assured quickly. "That night with Wormtail was an accident — you were the best Defence professor I've ever had, and you never should have left. I don't count you in the number that tried to kill me." He didn't want Remus to think Harry blamed him for what happened, even for a minute.

The man smiled slightly. "That's good to know, but that wasn't what I meant." Harry blinked, confused. "Are you that worried about this year's teacher endangering you?"

"Oh. Well, uh, track record hasn't been fantastic," Harry pointed out. "I wouldn't say worried, more... expecting the worst? Though it is concerning that we're this close to term and don't have one yet." Anyone who was such a last-minute hire was bound to be a problem, for one reason or another.

"You're not wrong, there," Remus agreed with a grimace. "With any luck, you'll get someone who's just incompetent rather than actually dangerous."