

“Hiya, Harry,” Angelina greeted, smiling broadly with her hand in Fred’s on the tabletop. Fred looked a lot happier than he’d been in the summer, too — George had regularly teased him about how much he’d missed his girlfriend, and clearly he was not remotely ashamed by it. It made Harry want to look towards the Slytherin table, but he couldn’t risk it.

“Hey, everyone. Good to see you.” He grinned quickly. “Let’s hope they don’t cancel quidditch again this year, hmm? Congrats, Angie,” he added, seeing the shiny captain’s badge on her robe.

“They’d better bloody not,” she muttered, glaring up at Dumbledore suspiciously. “This is our last chance for another cup win.”

It made Harry’s chest hurt to think about quidditch without Angelina — and without the Alicia and the twins, who would graduate with her — and when he glanced over at Katie, he could see she felt the same way.

“Let’s hope there’s a brilliant keeper somewhere in this lot, then,” Katie remarked, looking over the assorted Gryffindors. Harry had almost forgotten that they still had to replace Oliver, since there had been no quidditch the year before. He wondered if that had anything to do with Ron’s request for a new broomstick.

“Never mind that,” George cut in, smirking. “Have you seen the fresh meat up at the head table?”

Harry turned his eyes to the teachers, and flinched at the blaze of pink sat right beside Dumbledore. “Who the hell is she?” She looked like an overgrown toddler, with her round face and fuzzy pink cardigan.

“New Defence professor, got to be,” Fred said. “Looks like you’re in luck, Harry — I highly doubt she’s a Death Eater, with a wardrobe like that.”

The girls giggled, but Harry only felt dread, remembering Draco’s words about Fudge’s delight with the appointment.

Time would tell, he supposed.

A hush descended over the hall as McGonagall brought the Sorting Hat to its usual place, and a long line of first years filed down the middle of the hall. Harry braced himself for a song.

He did not expect the one that followed.

The clear warning about inter-house rivalry hung heavy in the air, long after the sorting itself had begun. Harry looked up at Dumbledore — the headmaster’s lips were curved in a genial smile, but Harry could see the annoyance in those twinkling blue eyes. He was *not* happy with that hat.

“Bit on the nose, wasn’t it?” George whispered, leaning close to Harry. Harry hummed in agreement, sharing a look with Neville.

Hogwarts was on their side, he could feel it.