

handbag.

As Harry suspected, the three taxi drivers seemed utterly bewildered at the owl in the cage; Pig wasn't helping, making quite the racket as he was wedged into the back seat on Ron's lap. Crookshanks wasn't thrilled either, and by the time they all reached King's Cross, Harry, Ron and Hermione were covered in scratches.

"I'm really sorry," Hermione said for the hundredth time as they stepped through the barrier onto platform 9 & 3/4, her cat tucked securely under her arm. They stepped to the side, and Charlie started resizing everybody's trunks.

After they'd found a compartment and stowed their luggage away, they all returned to the platform to say goodbye to Mrs Weasley, Bill and Charlie. "Keep in touch," Bill urged with a grin, pulling Ron into a hug once he was done with the twins. "You lot are in for one hell of a year, I want to hear about all of it. You too, Harry," he added, hugging the dark-haired teen tightly.

"I might see you all sooner than you think," Charlie confessed, releasing Ginny with a kiss on the forehead.

"Why's that?" Fred asked quickly. Charlie tapped his nose conspiratorially, winking.

"Secret," he insisted. "Don't tell Percy I mentioned it. It's 'classified information until the Ministry sees fit to release it'," he droned with a roll of his eyes. Harry's gaze narrowed thoughtfully; did that mean Charlie was involved in the Tournament somehow?

The two eldest Weasley boys delighted in taunting their siblings with veiled references to the secret surprise right up until the whistle blew, and they had to hurry to catch the train. Harry spotted Neville wandering with his trunk as they headed for their compartment. "Oi, Neville!" he called, waving an arm. The round-faced boy looked up. "Wanna sit with us?"

Neville grinned, nodding, and the four of them took their seats, shoving Neville's trunk into the luggage rack with their own and shutting the compartment door. "Why wouldn't they just tell us what's going on this year?" Ron groused. "We wouldn't tell anyone."

"From the sounds of things, we'll find out tonight anyway," Harry placated, as if he didn't already know the secret. "How was your summer, Neville?" He acted as if he hadn't been writing to the other boy regularly, and Neville grinned at him.

"It was great! Gran let me put a whole section for aquatic plants in the greenhouse." As he enthused about all the new specimens he had, Harry's mind turned to the dilapidated greenhouse at Seren Du. He'd intended to start clearing it out over the summer, maybe grow some potions ingredients — he actually enjoyed gardening at the Dursleys — but it had turned out to be a much bigger project than any of them had anticipated. Remus and Sirius had promised to get it emptied out ready for the next summer. Maybe by then Harry would be able to tell Neville about it and get some advice. Neville didn't even know the truth about Sirius, yet.