

Chapter 96

Things were very different, with Dumbledore gone.

The heirs adjusted the wards as soon as Harry was cleared to do magic again, making sure the former headmaster couldn't set a single foot on Hogwarts grounds. Luna sent off the article for her father, assuring it would likely be out fairly soon — one last issue, and then Xenophilius Lovegood would pack up his printing press and hide out until the storm had passed.

By Monday, Harry was more than ready to get back to classes and start doing something *normal* again. Draco had finally stopped watching him like he'd disappear if the blond turned away for more than a few seconds.

He could have done without their mutual decision to go back to their dorms at night instead of sleeping in the Room of Requirement, but it was necessary. If only to stop giving Neville a tiny heart attack every time he woke up and saw Harry's bed empty.

It was a relief, to walk into the DADA classroom after Ancient Runes. Finally, someone who wouldn't treat him like fucking glass.

At the front of the classroom, Professor Snape sneered at Harry in contempt, dark eyes flashing. Harry smirked back. He might be 'taking it easy' on his magical core, but there was still a lot of wiggle room there. A lot of ways Snape could take out his *annoyance* at Harry's continued existence, though they both knew Voldemort would have thrown a fit if Dumbledore had taken away his opportunity to destroy his fated enemy.

It was a mildly exhausted, but much more relaxed Harry who slumped into a seat at the Gryffindor table for lunch. Neville slid in beside him, looking shell-shocked. "That was *brutal*," he whispered, making Harry chuckle.

"He doesn't mean it," he said quietly, grinning. "It's fun."

Neville shot him a look that said he thought Harry had lost his mind, but didn't question it.

Potions after lunch was the opposite. Slughorn was bending over backwards to accommodate Harry, practically going so far as to brew his potion for him. "Just do whatever you feel up to, Harry, my lad!" the man kept saying, smiling slightly anxiously every time.

It would have been supremely annoying, had Harry not decided this was a perfect chance to get some answers.

When the class ended, Harry took his time packing up, brushing a kiss across Draco's cheek and murmuring that he'd follow in a moment. Draco caught on quickly, though still didn't look thrilled about leaving Harry alone with their teacher.

Maybe he hadn't *quite* stopped watching Harry like he'd disappear. But they'd get there.