

With the formal greetings out of the way, Harry was finally facing Draco, who smirked at him. “Unanticipated company, Potter?” he remarked, reminding Harry of the first letter he’d sent at the beginning of summer. “Bit of an understatement.” He didn’t seem fazed by the enormous manor and its grounds; he probably lived in something twice the size of it. “No wonder you’ve been able to practice your Wronski Feint. Which I still don’t believe you can pull off, by the way,” he added.

“I’ll prove it to you,” Harry challenged. He glanced up at Sirius, who smiled fondly.

“Yes, you two can go flying. Narcissa and I can catch up in the parlour. Maybe even lure Snape up from his lab for a spot of tea.”

“Uncle Severus is here?” Draco asked, surprised.

“I’m sure he’d be delighted to see you, sweetheart, but you go ahead and play with Harry — it’s his birthday, after all. We’ll call you in for lunch,” Narcissa said. She reached into her handbag, and Harry beamed when she pulled Draco’s broom out, the bag much bigger on the inside than it appeared. “Have fun, boys. Do be safe. And happy birthday, Mr Potter.”

“Thanks, Mrs Malfoy!” Harry grabbed Draco by the wrist, tugging him in the direction of the quidditch pitch at the back of the manor. When they were alone, he rounded on his friend.

“You’re supposed to be in France!”

“You’re supposed to be in *Surrey*,” Draco returned in the same tone. “Explain, Potter.” He mounted his broom, kicking off in a lazy spiral, and Harry summoned his Firebolt from the broom shed to join him. The two drifted in easy laps around the half-pitch as Harry told Draco all about Snape rescuing him from the Dursleys at the beginning of summer, and everything that had happened since.

“Mother was surprised when she got the letter from Uncle Severus, asking if we could get away for the day on the 31st,” Draco said once it was his turn to explain things. “I suppose your godfather included a letter too, explaining his circumstances. She took it fairly well, all things considered.”

“I didn’t realise she knew we were even friends,” Harry commented. Draco shrugged, doing an effortless barrel roll.

“I tell my mother everything,” he said evenly. “She won’t tell Father.” He smirked, swooping over to Harry’s side. “Now, enough about our guardians — surely you’ve got a snitch around here somewhere?” His eyes flashed in challenge, and Harry returned the look.

“You’re on, Malfoy.”

.-.-. .

Harry hadn’t realised how much he missed having company his own age until he had Draco around. Or maybe it was just Draco in particular. Being able to spend time with the blond boy without having to hide in abandoned classrooms in the middle of the night; flying against him