

snapped, and then he was gone.

“Blimey. What was that about?” Charlie asked, watching Sirius with concern.

“Nothing important,” Sirius dismissed, a false smile still on his face, eyes shining with contempt at the doorway Snape had left through. When he looked to the dragon tamer, he softened a little, and turned his gaze to the Weasley patriarch. “Welcome back, Arthur. Glad to hear you’re all healed up!”

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The Weasley parents tried their best to make that evening’s dinner a celebratory one, but considering half the house was dreading facing Umbridge the next day, it was not quite as cheerful as it could have been. Sirius was preparing his finest sulk at the prospect of Harry leaving — and failing to hold it, with Bill and Charlie nudging him into laughter whenever he looked too morose.

Charlie didn’t dare flirt with him too blatantly in front of his own mother, not wanting to hear the utter tirade she would go on if she realised how he felt about Sirius. That didn’t stop him from watching fondly, and bumping the older man’s knee beneath the table whenever he saw him staring wistfully at Harry, who was sat with Fred and George and looked to be planning some mischief or another.

“It’ll be quieter without him,” he said softly into the man’s ear, when Mum was busy at the stove. “But you won’t be lonely.”

He loved watching the tips of Sirius’ ears flush red.

Further up the table, Bill looked to be having a serious conversation with their father. Charlie wondered what it was about, and strained his ears to listen in. All he caught was the word *Wizengamot*, but that was enough.

He and Bill had talked it over, and their dad’s injury was a perfect excuse to talk to him about taking up their seats. They wanted to move soon — both of them were of the mind that Harry was being far too optimistic to think he could keep both Dumbledore and Fudge oblivious until he came of age, and the more trustworthy seats they held before shit hit the fan, the better.

From the look on Bill’s face, though, the conversation wasn’t going well. Their father didn’t consider the seats a burden at all, not when he left all his voting to Dumbledore.

“It’s our birthright, Dad,” Charlie heard Bill say. “I know we’re young, but we’re ready for it. You’ve got enough on your plate.”

Charlie caught his older brother’s eye, silently asking if he needed back-up. Bill shook his head minutely, then gave him a smirk that Charlie translated as *stay over there and keep flirting*.

Well, if Bill insisted...