

“I can’t tell you where,” Harry told him. “Like, physically cannot tell you.” Understanding dawned in Draco’s silver gaze.

“You’re with them, then? Dumbledore’s lot?”

“Unfortunately,” Harry sighed. “It’s nice to see the twins and Ginny again, but...”

“But you’re also stuck with Weasel and Granger,” Draco finished knowingly. “Are they being awful?”

“Not actually as bad as I expected, honestly. It’s mostly Ron’s mum trying to push us together even when everyone else can see we’re not friends anymore.” Thanks to Mrs Weasley’s meddling, he’d been forced to eat dinner sat between Ron and Hermione. He’d survived mostly by ignoring them entirely and talking to Ginny, who was sat opposite. To their credit, Ron and Hermione didn’t seem keen to talk to him either. “I think they realised they went too far with ignoring me all summer. After I maybe yelled at them a bit.”

One of Draco’s pale eyebrows rose, and Harry filled him in on his little tantrum the other night. By the end of it, Draco was biting his lip to keep from laughing. “And you say *I’m* dramatic,” he teased, shaking his head.

“You can’t say they didn’t deserve it,” Harry argued, blushing.

“Oh, that and far more — I’d have hexed them all for leaving you alone like that.” There was a protectiveness to his tone that made Harry blush harder, though for entirely different reasons. “Still, be careful; you don’t want to alienate yourself from them entirely, not this early in the game. You don’t know what the headmaster is expecting of you.”

Harry scowled — Merlin, he wished he didn’t still have to play Dumbledore’s stupid game. “I know,” he assured. “But it’s fine if he thinks I’m naturally shedding the Compulsions; apparently that’s normal during puberty, especially after traumatic events. Remus says so,” he added with a fond roll of his eyes. “As long as I can get through the year with him thinking I still trust him — and thinking I don’t know much more than he’s allowed for me to find out — I should be alright.”

It was a tricky line to walk, especially when all he wanted to do was hex the man into oblivion, but until Harry was in a better position to fight, he had to play it safe.

And with the discovery of a second horcrux — neither of which he’d told Draco about, just to be safe — he had no idea how long it would take to be ready to fight Voldemort. He just hoped he could hang on that long.

“You’re putting a whole lot of faith in Dumbledore assuming you can’t outwit him,” Draco said, his expression showing just how unhappy that made him. Harry offered the blond a smile.

“Draco, Dumbledore assumes *no one* can outwit him. He’s spent years believing himself to be infallible — he’s not going to lose sleep over a fifteen year-old boy who just seems to be