

“Well,” he started, clearing his throat. “I’m aiming for it to happen in the summer. I need—I’ll have my best chance if I’m fully of age when I face him, with my whole family magic behind me.” Around the table, everyone was nodding, as if that made perfect sense. No one pointed out that his birthday was a long way away, that all manner of awful things could have happened by then. “There are a couple of things I need to take care of before we can reach that point, as well.”

“So as it stands, we’re looking at a summer battle,” Susan said, nodding resolutely. “At least it won’t mess with classes.” Harry snorted; that was one way to look at it.

“There’s nothing we can do about the world outside the castle,” Daphne cut in bluntly. “As much as we’d like to, we can’t. There are adults out there who can — adults we can actually trust — and we’re best leaving that to them. While I hate to admit it, with Dumbledore here, the Dark Lord isn’t likely to come after the school. No matter how badly he wants to get his hands on Harry.”

“So what can we do?” Ernie asked, puffing himself up indignantly. “Because I’m sure as hell not going to just sit around and wait for the battle to come!”

“We can train,” Harry said firmly, before an argument could arise. “Give me til the weekend to get my schedule sorted, then I’ll get the HA back together. Some of our older members might have graduated, but we can work with the ones we’ve got. The more capable fighters we have when the battle comes, the better.”

“But what if You-Know-Who comes before you turn seventeen?” Parvati asked worriedly. Harry’s brow furrowed.

“We’ll deal with that when the time draws closer. We know he’ll be too busy reorganising the Ministry for at least the next few months, that’ll buy us some time. I’ll be honest, guys; it’s not going to be easy. It’s going to be a hell of a long year. But we’ll do what we’ve always done — prepare ourselves the best we can, and keep trying to undermine both Voldemort and Dumbledore in the eyes of the students.”

Admittedly, Harry’s plans for destroying Dumbledore’s reputation were going to be a lot harder now Amelia and Mrs Frobisher couldn’t set foot in the Ministry, or leak anything to the *Prophet*.

But that was his problem, not the rest of his friends’. All they had to do was keep themselves safe.

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With what felt like half of Gryffindor house pressuring him to hurry up, Harry managed to organise Gryffindor quidditch team tryouts for the second Saturday of term, right after breakfast. He and Katie met on the pitch in their training gear, brooms in hand — and Harry stared wide-eyed out at the crowd in the stands.

“Please tell me they’re not all here to try out,” he croaked, and Katie laughed.