

Neville snorted. He opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off by a strangled yell from up in the boys' dormitory tower. The whole common room went silent. Harry flicked his wand free of its holster, tensing.

There were hurried footsteps, then Ron burst into view, dragging a bedsheet in his wake. "LOOK!" he roared, stalking straight for Hermione, pointing at her with the fist that held the bedsheet. "LOOK!"

"Ron, what—?"

"SCABBERS!" Ron yelled, shaking the sheet in her face. "THERE'S BLOOD ON THE SHEETS, AND HE'S GONE!" Harry looked closer, his heart sinking at the small, rust-red stain on the fabric. "YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE WAS THERE? THIS!" Ron thrust out his other hand, opening it to show a handful of long, ginger cat hairs. "YOUR BLOODY CAT KILLED HIM!"

"Ron, I'm sure he's just missing, he's probably hiding under one of the beds," Hermione started. Ron took an angry step forward.

"Yeah, bleeding to death!" he spat. The rest of the Gryffindors, realising that it wasn't another Sirius Black attack but actually just Ron being dramatic, promptly went back to their previous business. Harry shared an uneasy look with Neville.

"I'm sorry, Ron!" Hermione actually had tears in her eyes, but Ron was red-faced with fury and didn't seem to care. "Cats chase rats, I can't keep him locked in my room all the time! You don't even know he was in there, those hairs could've been there from Christmas!"

"You never should've bought that bloody menace in the first place! Tell her, Harry!"

"I'm staying out of this," Harry insisted, shaking his head. "I've got homework to do." He turned away, beckoning Neville to follow with a jerk of his head, ignoring Ron yelling after him. He wasn't going to start taking sides, even if Scabbers was really dead. He was an old rat, it would've happened eventually.

"So much for all being friends again," he muttered with a glance to Neville, who grimaced apologetically.

At least he had a broom now. That was one problem sorted.

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Even a ride on Harry's Firebolt after quidditch practice couldn't cheer Ron up. He was taking the loss of Scabbers hard, and outright refusing to talk to Hermione unless it was to argue with her. It was a toss up on any given day whether he'd speak to Harry, either, but the Firebolt seemed to be the deciding factor. Up until they saw Crookshanks in the grass, the cat almost giving Harry a heart attack. He could've sworn it was the Grim again. He wished he'd never taken bloody Divination.