

Chapter 18

Despite the hectic start, the rest of Harry's time at the Burrow was much the same as it always was. Mr Weasley and Percy were barely present for the week that followed the World Cup, drowning in work and howlers and more scathing articles from Rita Skeeter. Harry felt bad for them; even Percy didn't deserve that.

Having the two eldest Weasley boys around was a nice change in the dynamic, too. They weren't always home, taking the opportunity to visit British friends they hadn't seen in a while, but when they were around they were usually fairly game for whatever shenanigans the teenagers had planned. Harry made sure to spend plenty of time talking to them, remembering what Hannah had said the year before about the two likely being the next heirs to the Weasley and Prewett seats. He never quite managed to bring up the subject with them, but he got to know them well enough to tell they were probably trustworthy.

The one thing Harry couldn't quite get used to was not using his wand. He'd gotten so used to being able to cast spells without hesitation at Seren Du, he kept finding himself with his wand in his hand before he could catch the habit. It earned him some odd looks from Ron and Hermione, but Harry suspected they just thought he was jumpy after the Cup.

Whatever time Ron and Hermione had spent together before Harry had arrived at the Burrow, they'd clearly used it to talk through the last of the issues they'd had from the previous year, when Ron had accused Hermione's cat of eating Scabbers and been awful to her for half the school year. Then again, finding out that rat was actually a Death Eater in disguise had probably gone a long way to easing that argument. Things were almost back to normal between the trio — except Harry was still keeping secrets, and Ron and Hermione didn't seem to realise that he'd grown up some in the last year while they'd been busy arguing. Ron didn't like it when Harry shot down all his disparaging remarks about Slytherins, and Hermione had nearly exploded when Harry had refused her offer to help him finish his summer homework.

"I got it all done at the Dursleys'," he insisted. "Thanks, but you guys go ahead." The offer had only come when Ron had realised he still had a stack of essays to complete, and Hermione had pestered him into getting them done *before* they were on the train to school.

"I can go over them for you, then," Hermione replied dismissively. Harry bristled at the insinuation that his work wasn't good enough.

"I don't need you to go over them for me, Hermione, but thank you." He tried to stay polite. Even if she didn't know he'd already had Remus go over his summer homework, who was she to just *assume* his work would need checking and correcting?

"Don't be silly, Harry, I really don't mind. You'll be better off for it."

"I'm happy with my work how it is," Harry replied between clenched teeth. "I'm going to go find the twins." He slipped out of the room before she could argue with him further, rolling his eyes when Ron complained about having to study when Harry wasn't.