

“Lucky bastard.”

The rest of their friends had already changed into their robes by the time the three boys returned, and they rummaged through their trunks for their own robes. “How was it?” Draco asked, shifting over so Harry could sit down once he had changed. Harry huffed.

“About as awful as expected. Apparently Dumbledore’s told him I need ‘the right guiding hand’,” he added, making a face. Draco sneered.

“Charming.”

“Isn’t he just.” Still, Snape thought it was important to be nice to Slughorn, so Harry would hold his temper.

They didn’t get any other visitors for the rest of the journey, and soon the train was pulling into Hogsmeade station. Before they opened the compartment door, Harry slid an arm around Draco’s waist, kissing him firmly.

“Merlin, give it a rest, you two!” Ginny exclaimed, poking him in the shoulder. “Godric only knows how the pair of you managed to keep this secret for so long.”

Harry grinned, unrepentant. “*Some of us* can’t snog our boyfriends in the middle of the common room,” he retorted pointedly. “It’s my last chance for a while, give me a break.”

But all the same, he reluctantly let go of Draco, and followed Neville out of the compartment.

Already, people were whispering about the pair of them sitting together for the train ride. As they headed to the thestral-drawn carriages, Harry spotted Ron and Hermione glaring daggers in his direction.

Seeing the castle looming on the horizon made something tighten in Harry’s chest — he hated feeling that way, when before the castle had been the one place he could truly relax.

He hated Dumbledore, for *making* him feel that way.

Discreetly, Draco squeezed his knee, gaze knowing.

The pair of them walked shoulder to shoulder into the castle, only stopping when they got to the door of the Great Hall. While Harry wished he could take a leaf out of Luna and Daphne’s book and kiss his partner goodbye, he had to settle for squeezing Draco’s shoulder before they parted for their house tables — and that was enough to set off a wave of whispers through the hall. Harry sat between Ginny and Neville, keeping his head down. He really didn’t want to know what people thought of him, these days.

Further up the table, Katie was sat with a few of her year mates, and she gave him a discreet thumbs up, tapping her chest where on Harry the Quidditch Captain badge was pinned proudly. Harry grinned back at her; Merlin, he was looking forward to playing quidditch again.