

decision that it is not safe to allow the examination board access to the school at this time. The usual examiners have been... *replaced*, and I refuse to lose any more of the students under my care. As such, I am sorry to say that OWL and NEWT examinations will not be possible this year.”

“What?!” Sully yelped, alarm in their eyes.

“But what about graduation?” Katie exclaimed worriedly. “If the fifth years miss OWLs they can just take them next year. Will we have to come back to school?” None of the seventh years looked happy about that idea, grumbling quietly to each other.

“I will be completely honest with you, Miss Bell, I cannot say,” McGonagall said frankly.

It was jarring, for Harry, to have the Transfiguration professor be so upfront with them. Dumbledore as headmaster had always been so mysterious and omnipotent — he had all the answers, and was just waiting for the world to slot neatly into place at his command. He was also condescending as anything, treating even the older students like small children.

McGonagall, on the other hand, spoke to them like the capable almost-adults she knew them to be after having watched them grow in her classes for several years. She didn’t sugar-coat things, didn’t bullshit them. Even when it meant admitting she couldn’t fix everything.

“While I would like to say that it will be possible for the current seventh year students to take their exams over the summer, I cannot guarantee that will be the case.”

Harry tried not to squirm as almost every head swivelled in his direction. McGonagall folded her arms over her chest. “*However*,” she continued pointedly, “We will make sure that as soon as it is safe, we will arrange for examinations to be held, and for accommodations to be made for returning seventh years. Myself and the rest of the staff will do whatever we can to help you prepare for those exams, no matter how long it has been since you were last our student.” She smiled tightly. “Hogwarts will not abandon you. Any of you. It just might take a while for things to catch up.”

“What about the sixth years,” Ernie asked, frowning. “This doesn’t really affect us, does it? I mean,” he chuckled nervously, “by the time our exams roll around, everything will be back to normal.”

Again, everyone stared at Harry. He clenched his jaw.

“I am informing the sixth years because there may come a point next year where you are joined in your classes by the current seventh years, for a revision session, so to speak. I would hope that you would help your fellow students cover any content they may have gotten rusty on in the interim.”

“Can we take our exams independently?” A seventh year Slytherin girl asked, sat with several of her housemates. She looked entirely bored by the whole thing. “Not all of us have to hide from our own Ministry, you know.”