

“Indeed.” Together they watched the students file out of the hall, not a single one of them excitedly discussing their summer plans, as they would in a normal year. Even the ones who would be leaving looked like they were going to battle.

They looked as exhausted as Harry felt.

“What will the housing situation be, once the students are set?” Harry queried — he had left those sorts of decisions up to the staff, as they were none of his business.

“All remaining students will be moved down to the Hufflepuff dormitories. Slytherin house will remain open for any adults seeking refuge who are not here to fight. The rest we will split between Gryffindor and Ravenclaw.” McGonagall’s lips pursed. “I have offered your godfathers rooms within the empty staff quarters.”

“I’m staying in Gryffindor,” Harry told her. “I’m not going down with the students.” He needed to be a leader, not a child.

To his relief, McGonagall nodded. “I expected as much. Yourself and Mr Longbottom shall remain in your dormitory, along with anyone you wish to join you. I trust I can expect the pair of you to behave responsibly.”

A brief flicker of a smile. “No wild parties, promise.” Then a thought. “It’s not us you have to worry about. The twins are coming back.”

The headmistress gave a long-suffering sigh. “I have realised that, yes. My hope is that Miss Johnson and Mr Zabini will keep them from causing too much trouble. Failing that, their elder brothers.”

“Good luck with that,” Harry said with a snort.

A head of silver-blond hair approached him as the last of the students left the hall. Harry held out a hand, twining his fingers with Draco’s. “Pack your trunk tonight,” Harry requested, watching confusion cross the Slytherin’s face. “You’re moving up with me tomorrow.”

Grey eyes darted nervously towards the headmistress. “That— that’s allowed?”

McGonagall eyed them knowingly, the barest hint of a smile. “I daresay even if I said no, you’d find yourself up there anyway.” She looked a little sad, gaze dropping to their joined hands. “Times like these, we should hold on to the joys that we have even tighter. I shall not begrudge you that, Mr Potter, with the task you have to face.”

Harry nodded, squeezing Draco’s hand that little bit tighter.

At last, the hall was empty but for the three of them.

“It begins, then,” Harry murmured, looking up at the magical night sky of the ceiling. It was a clear night — a full moon night. Part of him wished Remus had come early, so that he could take his fox form and run with his godfathers, feel that freedom.

One last chance before his birthday to do so.