

He needed to make sure no one could ever stifle his magic in the same way ever again.

Shuffling down to rest his head on the pillow, Harry closed his eyes, determination still tight in his jaw. It was too early for a plan yet — he still didn't know for sure who he was planning against — but he had time to prepare. He was only thirteen. No one would be expecting much of him yet.

That would be their mistake.

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At long last, Harry's peace was broken by the arrival of the Weasleys and Hermione on the morning of August 31st. He found them outside of Fortescue's, ice creams in front of them while Harry wandered over from having just been in Flourish and Blotts again. Ron had even more freckles than usual, and Hermione's brown skin seemed to have darkened several shades.

They beamed at him, Hermione grabbing him in a tight hug as soon as he was close enough. "We wondered where you were, mate!" Ron exclaimed, patting him on the back as Harry sat down. "We went to the Leaky Cauldron, but Tom said you'd already left."

"I was just wandering," Harry said with a shrug. "Got all my school things last week, so I haven't had much else to do lately." He wasn't ready to tell his best friends about what he'd been up to in the last three weeks. Not until he knew who he could trust. "How was Egypt? And France?"

"Never mind that," Hermione waved off. "Did you *really* blow up your aunt, Harry?"

"I didn't exactly do it on purpose," Harry replied, rolling his eyes. "She's fine now. The ministry got it all sorted out." Of course Fudge wasn't going to expel him when some sort of madman was after his skin.

"It's not funny, Ron!" Hermione insisted, while Ron roared with laughter. "Harry could've been expelled!"

"Yeah, but he wasn't," Ron retorted, still grinning.

"What's with all the books, Hermione?" Harry asked, quickly changing the subject. She had a huge stack of books by her side; far more than should be on her school list.

"Oh, well I'm taking more new subjects than you, aren't I?" she replied, pointing out which subject each book was for. Harry's jaw dropped.

"How is it even possible to take that many?" The form McGonagall had them fill out asked for two additional subjects, three at maximum. Hermione was taking five.

"I've got it all sorted out with Professor McGonagall, don't worry," Hermione said dismissively. "Now, Ron and I were just talking — I've still got some money left over from my parents, for an early birthday present, and I was thinking about getting an owl."