

And I'm sorry about you and Ernie."

"It's fine, really. We're still friends. Maybe we'll get back together one day, once he's done travelling. But maybe we won't." She shot him a teasing grin. "We can't all find our soulmates as fourth years, y'know."

He laughed, smile coming unbidden to his lips as he thought of his boyfriend — *fiancé*. "I suppose. Now go take a pain potion and lie down, for Merlin's sake." His playful fussing made her laugh, but she obediently wheeled herself back to her room, the magical chair responding to her thoughts.

Harry checked the wards, confirming that Snape and Remus had left McGonagall's office — they were headed down to the Potions classroom. Interesting.

He grinned to himself on his way up, wondering whether the pair would try and keep secrets. When he reached the gargoyle, his stomach twisted instinctively; he'd had so much pain, in this office.

Things would be better now.

"Perseverance," he declared, and the gargoyle hopped aside, revealing the revolving staircase.

The first thing he noticed was the distinct colour change — no longer did stepping into the office give you a headache. The carpet was a deep charcoal grey, and what little wallspace wasn't covered in bookshelves had a cheerful red and green tartan wallpaper. Most of the office, however, was books. Books on all sorts of magic, not just Transfiguration, the shelves interspersed with little trinkets and interesting statues, no doubt each one with a story behind it.

And then he noticed the perch in the corner, occupied once more. "Fawkes!"

The phoenix trilled happily, fluttering his wings.

"It seems Fawkes has decided to remain with the school," McGonagall explained, smiling slightly from behind her desk. It was the same one from her old office — nothing of Dumbledore's had stayed, it seemed. A fresh start entirely. "I don't know where he was this past year, but he came back shortly after I reclaimed the office. In quite a state, too. I dread to think what Albus might have done to the poor creature."

Now Harry looked closer, he could see Fawkes looked a little worse for wear, like he was overdue a burning day.

"I'm sure he'll perk up." Harry turned to the headmistress, seeing a cup of tea and that tartan biscuit tin waiting for him on the side table next to the chair. "What did you want to see me about, Professor?"

McGonagall let him get situated, studying him over the rim of her glasses. "Firstly, booklists will be sent out tomorrow morning, and I thought I'd save an owl the journey," she said,