

“How are you feeling, pup?” Sirius asked, grey eyes concerned.

“Not too bad.” He wasn’t going to be playing quidditch any time soon, that was for sure, but he couldn’t feel any real injuries. Draco had done an excellent job patching up, and he said as much, just to make the boy blush. “My magic feels weird.” It was hard to describe; it felt simultaneously sluggish and wired, far more *present* than he was used to.

“Yeah, that’ll likely even out in the next few days. You overdid it right after your maturation, that always screws with the system. That’s why they tell you not to do it,” Sirius added, snorting at Harry’s rueful expression.

“Didn’t have much of a choice, did I?” he shot back. Sirius sobered, ruffling Harry’s hair.

“You did wonderfully, kiddo,” he murmured, brimming with pride. “Couldn’t have asked any more of you.”

That brought a lump to Harry’s throat, and he blinked away the tears that threatened to spill. How could Sirius say that, when so many people had died?

Draco poked him hard in the side. “Get that look off your face,” he scolded. “You’re not responsible for every person who walked on that battlefield, the same way I’m not responsible for every person who needed healing out there. Agreed?”

Well, there was little Harry could do to argue that.

As the morning stretched on, Sirius relayed everything that had happened after they had parted the day before. The Ministry had indeed been mostly empty, and it hadn’t been difficult to separate out the genuine Dark loyalists with those who had just been too scared to go against it. The Ministry had been reclaimed, and Kingsley and Tonks — who Harry hadn’t seen yet, and was relieved to hear was alive — had arranged for all the surviving Death Eaters from the battle to be contained at the Ministry holding cells, their wands snapped if they hadn’t been already. It amused Harry to hear that almost no Death Eaters had wands intact by the time the battle ended; the HA had very much taken that lesson to heart, the ruthless little blighters.

So the word had started to spread around the country, the owls of Hogwarts put to good use as people sent letters to loved ones in hiding. It would take a while, for everyone to return to their homes — if they still had homes — and to pick up the pieces of their lives, but they had time now. They had peace.

The later it got, the more people began to show up. The tables filled with an assortment of breakfast foods as if it were a normal school morning, and Harry was so ravenous from his extended sleep he ate a whole second breakfast while chatting with Cassius and Oliver. The keeper apparently had some new scars from a Flaying curse, but it was nothing permanent. He kept sending adoring looks at Cassius, detailing to anyone who would listen how the man had jumped in to save him from certain death.

Harry was startled when the post arrived — for some reason he’d forgotten entirely that such things still happened. Letters had been so rare for the last month, everyone too worried about