

headmaster to access you there, with plenty of privacy in case he decides you need a little more magical control.”

The thought of Dumbledore cursing him while he was asleep made Harry sick to his stomach. “Going a whole school year without a trip to the Hospital Wing is going to be a tall order, sir,” he remarked with a weak laugh. Snape’s lips quirked.

“I gave you those potions for a reason, Potter. And if you need assistance, you can always come to me. I assume that map of yours will show you the way to my private quarters?” Harry nodded. “Then you have permission, *in an emergency*, to come to me there if needed. Don’t abuse that permission, Potter.”

“I won’t,” Harry promised, and he meant it. Snape was on their side. Like Sirius said, he was basically family now. Harry didn’t want to do anything to upset the truce they seemed to have reached.

“I want you to sit there for twenty minutes,” Snape instructed. “Read if you must, but I need to make sure you aren’t going to have any aftershocks. You can leave when it’s time for dinner.”

“Yes, sir.” Harry dug through his bag for his book, but he didn’t open it, instead leaning back in the chair and letting his eyes fall shut. If anyone told him last year he’d feel so relaxed in *Snape’s* office of all places, he would’ve laughed himself sick, but it was just so nice to be somewhere *quiet*. Somewhere no one expected anything of him, or wanted answers. A little bit of the refuge he’d had at Seren Du.

God, he missed that place. It was going to be a long, long school year.

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Once the announcement of the arrival of the foreign schools went out, it was all anyone could talk about. Even Draco, when he and Harry met up a few nights before Halloween, slipped in a mention of the two French girls he’d met over the summer, and how they wouldn’t be coming as they were still underage. Harry couldn’t find it in him to be sad about that.

At last, they were all gathered in the Entrance Hall, which was gleaming after its minor makeover. “This way, outside! Stay in line,” McGonagall instructed, fussing and scolding until all Gryffindors were in neat rows by year group outside the school. The other houses were organised the same way, their heads of houses keeping everyone in line. They waited.

Harry was reluctantly impressed by the arrival of both the delegations. Mostly he was glad for the warming charms Remus had put on his school cloak before he’d packed. When the students had emerged from both the carriage and the ship, they all started to head back inside; until the Durmstrang delegation grew close enough for everyone to see their famous member.

“*Viktor Krum!*” The whisper echoed through the crowd of students; Harry saw Krum duck his head and forge onwards, resolutely ignoring the squeals and mutters of his name. Harry could sympathise there.