

as I'm concerned, it's one less thing for me to worry about." He smirked at his boyfriend. "I was *hoping* it would mean more free time in my schedule to sneak about in unused classrooms, but clearly I'm going to be awfully lonely on that front."

"On the contrary, it just means I have a *reason* to be out past curfew, while you've got that fancy cloak of yours," Draco returned, a huskiness to his voice that made Harry's heart stutter.

His birthday felt like *eons* ago, now. He couldn't wait to have Draco in his arms again. "Seriously, though, I'm proud of you. I know you worked really hard to get that badge." Ron would probably say that Draco's father had bought him the badge, but Draco's grades spoke for themselves.

A pale flush rose on the blond's cheeks, a pleased smile crossing his lips. "Thanks. I expected it to be Blaise, honestly; he's a more politically sound choice."

He was the only Slytherin fifth year boy not directly connected to Death Eaters. "Your father aside, I think Snape would've had a fit if it was anyone but you. Dumbledore wouldn't have overruled him on this." Not like he almost definitely had with the Gryffindors — there was no way McGonagall would have picked Ron Weasley over the rest. Hell, even Seamus would have been a better choice than Ron.

"I can't wait to take points off Weasley the first time he insults me," Draco said with a smirk, and Harry laughed.

"God, there goes our chance at the House Cup." Even Ron's ability to take points wouldn't save them, considering prefect point adjustments had to be reviewed by the head of house.

There was a strange thud on Draco's side of the mirror, and the Slytherin boy froze. "I have to go," he whispered. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Before Harry could say anything, the mirror was blank. He growled under his breath.

The sooner Draco was away from that hellhole, the better.

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That evening, there was a party at Grimmauld Place, celebrating the two new prefects. Someone had conjured a banner, and the kitchen was decorated in red and gold. Half the Order was there — whether to celebrate or just to enjoy free food — and Mrs Weasley was happier than she had been all summer as she flitted between groups of people, offering up drinks and food, happily gushing about the newest prefect in the family.

"Harry, dear, I'm so sorry but I wasn't able to get your new schoolbooks," she said, an annoyed frown on her face. Harry tensed. "The goblins have changed the rules — they wouldn't let me in without you there, even though I had your key. I would have just bought them with the rest, but, well; the Slinkhard book isn't cheap, and..."