

## Chapter 85

No one at Seren Du was particularly thrilled about taking the trip to King's Cross the next morning. Snape left before anyone else, as he would be heading to the castle directly; he dropped the *Prophet* in disgust and stalked from the kitchen, Remus following hot on his heel, and when the werewolf returned ten minutes later the Potions Master did not come with him.

Harry didn't blame Snape for being too angry to continue reading the newspaper; he himself almost set it on fire accidentally. The front page, naturally, declared that Minister Scrimgeour was dead. However, it also talked about Voldemort's take-over of the Ministry as if it were a mere staffing change; it was clear the Death Eaters had control over the newspaper, too.

There went any form of reputable national news — though the *Prophet* had been barely reputable to begin with.

With little information to go on, Harry was half expecting the aurors to come for him at Platform 9&3/4, to drag him kicking and screaming to Voldemort himself under some bullshit arrest warrant. On the contrary, the platform was quiet — far quieter than it should have been. It seemed like there were a fair number of students who had chosen not to return — or, Harry realised with sickening clarity, had not survived the summer.

Only Sirius and Narcissa came with them to the platform, Remus and Charlie saying their goodbyes at the house. The two boys garnered some looks, arriving together, but Harry ignored them; people would soon find out that he and Draco had been friends all along.

"Stay safe," Sirius murmured, pulling Harry into a tight hug. Harry hugged him back, desperately wishing that Sirius' first time seeing him off to school was under better circumstances.

Next year.

"You, too," Harry replied, giving his godfather a warning look. "Keep me updated on anything important."

"Will do, kiddo." Sirius reluctantly let go, kissing him on the forehead. "Love you."

"Love you, too."

Harry let Narcissa kiss him on the cheek, the Malfoy matriarch warning him to be careful and take good care of her son. That got a small smile out of him, and a sincere nod.

Harry saw a cluster of redheads approaching — much smaller than usual, just Mrs Weasley, Ron and Ginny, with Hermione walking alongside them. Harry wondered how Mr Weasley was taking the whole Ministry situation. At least thanks to Bill, they knew he'd made it out unscathed.