

Chapter 42

Chapter Notes

CW for non-graphic discussions of a medical emergency/hospitalisation, discussion of death of a teenager.

It tore at Harry's heart to watch Draco and his mother leave — the only bright spot was that Harry had convinced Sirius to lend Draco his two-way mirror, just for the rest of the summer. He saw Sirius regularly, and always had Remus or Ceri to get him if he needed him. Harry couldn't bear to send Draco back home, knowing who was there, if he didn't have a way to communicate.

With his birthday a fond memory, and a new determination burning in his chest — a new fantasy in his mind, of life with Draco after the war was over — Harry threw himself into his training, unsure how much longer he'd have before Dumbledore deigned to *allow* him to leave his relatives', and his peace would be broken.

Unfortunately, Harry had no idea how quickly that day would come.

Only a few days after his birthday, Harry was training with Remus; Snape had been summoned by Dumbledore for the day. Duelling with Remus was always an interesting experience; he had a totally different style to Snape, but was clearly just as knowledgeable, and now he'd stopped worrying about hurting Harry he was quite the challenging opponent. Harry knew the man was still holding back, but it was less than before. There was progress.

Suddenly, the door slammed open — both of them turned their wands instinctively towards the noise, lowering them at the sight of Snape. He looked grave, his lips in a thin line.

"Potter, you need to go to your relatives, immediately."

Harry's heart sank. "Do they know I'm missing?" Had someone finally decided to investigate the fact that he never left his room?

"Not yet, but they will soon. The Ministry will be there any minute."

Staring up at Snape's dark eyes, Harry felt his pulse begin to race. "The Ministry?" Had there been an attack on the house?

"There's no easy way to say this. Someone set a dementor loose near your relatives' home, no doubt hoping it would find you. Instead it found your cousin."

The words echoed in Harry's mind like he was underwater. He barely registered Remus swearing quietly, placing a hand on Harry's shoulder. A dementor, in Little Whinging?