

“It’s nice to meet you, Professor Moody.”

“Bah!” Moody’s fake eye whizzed around in its socket. “Didn’t do much teaching, now, did I? Just Moody to you. This is Tonks. Dumbledore sent us to get you out of here.”

“That’s why you couldn’t go to the funeral,” Tonks piped up, her hair colour dimming sadly for a brief moment. “We’re really sorry you can’t say goodbye to your cousin properly, Harry.”

“That’s not why I’m not at the funeral,” Harry told her bluntly, watching her nose wrinkle in confusion. “But I’m glad you came while my relatives were out.”

“You all packed?” Moody asked gruffly, limping forward, eye still whirring. It prickled at Harry’s skin uncomfortably; exactly how much could he see with that thing? Harry still wasn’t sure.

“Just about.” He made a show of grabbing some quills and parchment off his desk and tucking them into his trunk — he wasn’t supposed to know he was being rescued, so he hadn’t wanted to be completely ready for them. Stuffing some clothes in haphazardly, he shut the lid, pretending to look around for one last check. “I’m ready.”

“Is the cat yours? Or your family’s?” Tonks asked curiously, gesturing to the cat flap. Harry’s return smile was bitter.

“That isn’t for a cat.” He would have felt bad about the bewilderment on her face, but really, was she being so oblivious on purpose? He’d been *locked in*. Eight times over! “How are we getting to... wherever we’re going?”

“Apparating,” Remus supplied. “It’s not the most comfortable thing in the world, but it’s the most discreet way to travel at this time of day. We’ll have to do a few different jumps, to make sure we don’t leave a trail.”

“Mad-Eye here wanted to fly you out,” Tonks volunteered, sounding amused. “But we can’t do that in broad daylight.”

“Yes, yes, it’s a shame we can’t wait ’til nightfall. Bloody muggles,” Moody grouched. “Let your owl free, Potter, she’ll meet you there.”

“Would if I could, sir.” Harry was getting a perverse amount of pleasure from playing this authentically; Hedwig’s cage was padlocked, as it would have been by Vernon if he’d truly stayed all summer.

“Ah, I’ll get it.” A tap of Remus’ wand, and the padlock dropped to the ground. Harry opened the cage — Hedwig, bless her devious little heart, made a show of stretching out her wings and adjusting her feathers, as if she’d been cooped up for weeks. She butted her head against Harry’s chin, nipped him on the ear, then took off out the open window.

“Right, let’s get moving, then. We’ve been dawdling too long as it is.” Moody straightened up, passing Harry’s trunk to Tonks, and Hedwig’s cage to Remus. “Take my arm, Potter.”