

“That’s more his dad than him. I think he actually sort-of feels bad about it. And yeah, he’s a prat, but he’s not as bad as he was before. People would start asking questions if he was suddenly nice to me.” Snape might have a heart attack. Ron, too, for that matter. And Merlin only knew what would happen if word got back to Lucius Malfoy that his son was being friendly to the Boy-Who-Lived.

“I s’pose,” Neville said with a shrug.

Harry gave the password to the Fat Lady, and the two of them stepped into the common room. Harry came up short when he saw Hermione and McGonagall there, the older woman holding— “My Firebolt!” He looked up hopefully. “Does this mean I can have it back?”

“You’ve got a very good friend, somewhere,” McGonagall declared. “We’ve done everything we can think of, and there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong with it.” She held it out, and Harry took it with reverent hands. “I daresay you’ll need to get the feel of it before Saturday’s match. Just don’t go out flying after dark without a professor. And, Potter—“ She smirked, meeting his eyes. “Make sure you win, won’t you? It’s been far too long since I’ve had the Quidditch Cup sitting in my office.”

Harry beamed at her. “I’ll try my best. Thanks, Professor.” He turned to the dark-skinned girl at the woman’s side. “Thanks for looking out for me, Hermione,” he added. His friend had been beating herself up over the broom since Ron had exploded on her about it, but Harry didn’t blame her one bit.

“It’s what I’m here for.” She grinned back at him. “I’m glad it turned out alright.”

As soon as McGonagall left, a crowd started gathering around Harry, his housemates clamouring to get a closer look at the international-standard broom. Harry let them, keeping a careful eye out to make sure no one damaged it. It would be just his luck to get it back only for some careless Gryffindor to break it.

“You got it back!” Ron shoved his way through the crowd, squeezing in at Harry’s side like he’d forgotten he was mad at the bespectacled boy. “See, told you there was nothing wrong with it!” This was said smugly to Hermione, who huffed.

“There *could’ve* been. Aren’t you glad that we know now?”

Ron rolled his eyes. “Can I ride it, Harry? Just for a bit? I’ll be really careful.”

“Maybe tomorrow. It’s too dark now. I should go put it away.” Ron’s hands clamped around the broom.

“I’ll take it. I’ve got to give Scabbers his rat tonic, anyway. I’ll be right back.” Before Harry could argue, he was off up the stairs, broom in hand.

“Well,” Hermione muttered, glancing first at Harry, then Neville. “Now you’ve got your expensive broomstick back, we’re his best friends again, I suppose.” There was a bitterness to her voice that made Harry wince. “Hopefully we can put all this behind us, now. Honestly, he’s giving me whiplash this year; I can never keep track of whether he likes me or not.”