

beckoned them forward, and he was nudged to step straight through the sheet glass shop front.

Being inside a magical hospital reception was about as chaotic as Harry might have imagined. He hardly knew where to look, seeing people with all sorts of bizarre ailments and injuries. He tried not to stare too hard at any one of them, following Mrs Weasley as she asked the Welcome Witch for directions.

The number of people in lime-green robes was almost blinding, and privately Harry much preferred the muggles with their white coats. Though at least you could find the healers easily, if you needed one. Those robes looked like they would glow in the dark!

An image popped into his head; Draco, older than he was now, wearing one of the vibrant robes and looking down at it as if it was a personal offence to be on his body. His lips twitched with a smile — even the bright green would probably look good on Draco. Attractive bastard.

Harry tried to linger back with Moody and Tonks, but the Weasleys were having none of that, and so he let himself be strong-armed into the ward. Mr Weasley looked to be in good spirits, propped up on several pillows and reading the *Daily Prophet*. He positively beamed at them all, setting the newspaper aside. “Oh, hello! Bill just left, had to pop into work. Shouldn’t you be at work, too, Charlie?”

“Don’t be daft, Dad,” Charlie said, voice thick with emotion. “Called in sick, didn’t I?”

Mr Weasley’s gaze was an attempt at being scolding, but he was clearly just happy to see his son. He held his good arm out for a hug. “Go on, I won’t break. Just be gentle with me; I’m not one of your dragons, you know!”

Charlie didn’t waste any time, hugging his father as tight as he dared. “Merlin, Dad,” he sighed, pulling back with a strained smile on his face. “Of everyone in the family, I thought it’d be me ending up in the Creature Injuries ward, one of these days.”

“Well, don’t take this as a challenge,” Mrs Weasley muttered roughly, leaning in to kiss her husband’s cheek. “You look peaky, dear.”

Harry hung at the back of the group, letting the Weasleys greet their injured family member, listening to Mr Weasley babble on about the ward and his fellow patients and how his wound was healing. He kept insisting he felt fine, but Harry could see the strain around his eyes, the wrinkles that were a little deeper than usual. He had the look of a man hiding how much pain he was in.

Fred and George began to ask questions; what their dad had been doing in the Ministry, how the snake got in, who had sent it. Really, they needn’t have bothered — Harry had all those answers, thereabouts, and would be happy to tell them most of it later. But it made Mrs Weasley cross, them asking about Order business, so the kids were soon shoved out and told to send Mad-Eye and Tonks in.