

“Of course, Horace,” McGonagall agreed with a half-smile. “I would be glad of the escort.” Since the battle, Harry noticed, the cane she’d used after being hit with all those Stunners last year had started to return every now and then. Seeing it made his stomach twist uncomfortably; a reminder that his battle-axe of a housemistress was not as indestructible and immortal as she had always appeared to be.

Slughorn brightened up, offering his arm to the headmistress, and together the lot of them set off out of the hall.

Harry walked with Draco’s hand in his, looking around the group in quiet amazement. Twenty-nine seats between them — possibly more to come depending how things went when all the Death Eaters were processed and all the wills enacted. Almost the entire Wizengamot, finally in capable hands. Harry was under no impression that they would all agree on everything, but he knew he could trust all of these people to make decisions with the whole country’s best interests at heart.

“I’m still very impressed the whole lot of you managed to convince your previous house heads to give up their seats to teenagers,” Amelia remarked as they strode across the grounds, carefully sidestepping around the battle scars. “Those of you with only proxy guardians is one thing, but the rest! Mr Macmillan, I am quite frankly astounded that your father is stepping down in your favour.”

Ernie shrugged, looking a little bashful. “We had a chat about it yesterday, when I went to get them out of hiding. I think going through this war a second time has made him reconsider what he wants in life. He was surprisingly agreeable to the whole thing, said that half our problems was the old traditionalists hanging on to their seats too long, and the Ministry could do with a few young revolutionaries.” He grinned at his friends, and they all grinned back.

The Ministry was about to get *plenty* of those.

Not every heir in the school had won over their guardians like Ernie had, though. Hannah’s mother, understandably, was retaining her seat at least until Hannah was out of her hospital bed, and very likely until after she was graduated too. But Blaise’s mother wasn’t retiring from the politics game any time soon, and Lord Patil wouldn’t hear a single word of it, so fresh from losing his daughter.

But it was a solid start. They had years, decades even, to get the rest on board.

“Harry, my lad,” Slughorn said quietly, prompting Harry to hang back a bit and fall into step beside the two professors. “That matter we discussed, before term ended — it has all been dealt with appropriately, I trust?” His eyes held a decades-old wariness. It took Harry a moment to figure out what he was referring to. Of course, he was concerned about the horcruxes.

“Yes, sir,” he assured. “All sorted. Every last bit.”

Slughorn just about shook with relief. “Good. Good lad. I had hope, when I heard about Severus and the snake, but... this old man’s heart can rest easy, now.”