

Dumbledore had been trying to lead him back to his office. “Harry, I must insist you come with me for a moment,” the headmaster attempted, but Harry kept walking.

“I want to see my friends. I need to make sure they’re okay.”

“You did not seem so concerned for their safety when you led them into danger,” Dumbledore said sagely, and Harry glared at him.

“They volunteered. They knew exactly what they were getting into. I’m still worried about them. Or do you not care about the lives of everyone you send into battle?”

“Those I send into battle are adults.”

“I’m not,” Harry pointed out sharply. “And yet you’ve managed just fine on that front.” He was losing his temper, perhaps, but he’d had a hell of a day, and the last thing he wanted was to hash everything out for Dumbledore so the man could give him some cryptic bullshit and sweep it all under the rug.

“Harry, my boy,” and there was that disappointed voice. “I must confess, I’m worried about you. You have been... different, this last year.”

“Maybe I’m just growing up,” Harry bit out. “Seeing your friend murdered in front of you will do that to a person.”

They reached the Hospital Wing, and Harry’s shoulders loosened at the sight of all five of his friends sat up in hospital beds, no longer covered in blood and dust and splinters of shelf like they had been when Harry had seen them last. They looked relieved to see him, too.

“How are you? Were any of you hurt?”

“Nothing Madam Pomfrey couldn’t fix,” Ginny promised. “She wants us all to stay overnight, but we’ll be fine tomorrow.”

That was excellent news, and Harry beamed at her.

“Ah, Mr Potter,” Madam Pomfrey herself greeted, stepping out of her office. “I was hoping you would arrive soon. Go on, then; on the bed, let me check you over.”

Harry didn’t argue with the mediwitch, perching on the edge of his usual bed and sitting still for her diagnostic spells.

“I have pieced together the vague series of events from various members of the Order,” Dumbledore began, “but I would like to hear your side of things, Harry. I am very intrigued to learn how six of my students made it all the way to London unaided.”

Harry bit his lip, thinking quickly to try not to incriminate Dobby. “We rode the thestrals, sir,” Luna piped up suddenly, in her usual dreamy voice. Dumbledore turned to her.

“Thestrals, Miss Lovegood?”