

Ginny bumped her shoulder against his sympathetically. “Ron and Hermione have been in their own little world all summer. They’re not together,” she added quickly at his surprised look, “but they don’t spend much time with us except when Mum makes us all clean together. Hermione tries to talk to me sometimes, when Ron’s pissed her off, but... all she wants to talk about is you, and all the things we’d have to do to *help* you once you got here.”

“Control me, you mean,” he said, grimacing. “Merlin... I’m not looking forward to that for the next month.”

“Are you going to keep pretending you’re friends?” George asked. “Or has that ship sailed?”

“I think by now, Dumbledore is pretty aware I keep shedding his Compulsions,” Harry said. “I don’t mind him thinking that as long as he’s not suspicious about the blocks.” He’d spent a lot of time thinking about how he would go about the upcoming school year; the time for hiding completely had passed. Let Dumbledore think he was just having a bit of a rebellious phase; let the man try and bring him to heel. Harry putting a wrench in his plans might hopefully leave him on the back foot, and allow Susan and her scheming to start crumbling his pedestal.

“So we’re all good to prank Ron this year?” Fred’s brown eyes were bright with mischief. Harry grinned.

“Be my guest.”

“Wicked,” the twins murmured in unison. Harry *almost* felt sorry for Ron. Almost.

“What else has been going on, then? I thought Bill would be here? And Percy?” He thought Charlie was the only one still out of the country.

The siblings shared a loaded glance. “Bill’s got a flat that Gringotts put him up in, he only comes in sometimes. Percy...” Ginny trailed off. The twins scowled.

“We don’t talk about that prat anymore,” George declared. Harry raised an eyebrow. That sounded like a story.

“He’s practically attached at the hip to Fudge,” Fred explained. “Siding with him on everything, thinks Dumbledore’s cracked and you’re an attention-seeking little brat. He had one hell of a row with Mum and Dad before we moved in here — said some bad shit to both of them, but Dad especially. Stormed out, we haven’t seen him since. Mum cries every time she so much as thinks about him.”

Harry let out a low whistle. “Wow.” He never would have expected that of Percy. Supporting the Minister, yes — he had always placed a lot of importance on rules and order and authority structures. But to go against his family... that was surprising.

“Right. No talking about Percy, got it.” He hummed thoughtfully, wondering if there was anything else to catch up on. It was easy with these three; he’d been talking to them all summer, there wasn’t much of a gap to fill in. And he definitely didn’t want to talk about Dudley or dementors or any of that yet.