

*Don't want to be late*, I swear to fucking Merlin I am going to leave behind a prank that will make Charlie not want to touch him for *weeks*.” He was already thinking about it, running through his mental list of spells, wondering what would be appropriate — what didn't have an immediate counter to it.

“You could do that,” Draco drawled, sitting up and giving him a pointed look. “Or you could come and join me in the shower and we'll finish what we started.”

On second thought, that was a much better idea than Harry's.

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Sirius was a ball of energy at breakfast, talking a mile a minute, asking the boys if they had everything and reminding Harry to send Hedwig off with his signed England contract before he left, babbling as he worried a napkin between his fingers. Harry couldn't even be mad at him about the interruption; his godfather was a little bit of a wreck, and it tugged at Harry's heart.

He was a bit of a wreck, too, inside. They were leaving this house, his home, his sanctuary, and they were going to board the Hogwarts Express for the very last time.

He kept telling himself he was being ridiculous — he could go back and visit Hogwarts whenever he liked, they *literally* couldn't keep him out even if they wanted to. And for the first time ever there was nothing to fear from the castle; no manipulative headmasters or murderous Dark Lords or tricks and traps lurking round dark corners for Harry to fall into.

Just classes, and friends, and quidditch.

McGonagall was right — without the Head Boy position, he would go *spare* with boredom.

Assuring Sirius for the hundredth time that yes, he had everything, and even if he didn't he could ask Ceri to get it or just apparate home and get it himself, Harry finished off his breakfast and stood. And paused.

He'd left this place for a whole school year before. Multiple times. So why did it feel so much worse, now?

Sirius slung an arm over his shoulders, snapping him out of his reverie. “Time to rejoin the big wide world, now, kiddo,” he murmured. “No more hiding out here and pretending the rest of it all doesn't exist.”

Oh. That was why.

Harry resolutely swallowed against the tears that threatened to come, nodding sharply. “I'm gonna go send Hedwig off.” He had signed the contract with the England team, after having Mrs Frobisher read through the whole thing and check that he wasn't going to be stuck with some unreasonable publicity bullshit. It was great, and once Andy received it Harry would officially be seeker for England.

Big wide world, indeed.