

“I can keep myself occupied,” Harry said, though he couldn’t completely hide his disappointment. “I’m just glad to be here.”

He claimed one of the scones for himself, then looked up at the two adults on the other sofa. “So how much can you tell me? What’s Voldemort up to, do you know yet?” It had only been a week since the night of the third task, but Harry felt like an age had passed in which Voldemort could be gathering strength and numbers.

“I have not yet been summoned, though I suspect I will be soon now that term has ended,” Snape told him. “Many of the Dark Lord’s old followers have returned to him, and will soon be making overtures towards new ones.”

“Has anyone found Karkaroff yet?”

Snape grimaced briefly. “Igor was found, yes. He is... no longer with us.”

Harry had expected as much, but it still made him flinch. The man had been creepy, but he didn’t deserve whatever awful death he’d been given at the hands of Voldemort and his people.

“Other than that, there’s not much to tell,” Remus admitted, leaning against the arm of the sofa. He looked weary, though Harry wasn’t sure if it was the full moon or just the stress of the last week. “The Order is gathering. The Ministry continues to deny any hint of Voldemort’s return — they’ll no doubt start firing anyone who’s too close to Dumbledore, soon.”

“But surely Dumbledore wants as many of his people in the Ministry as possible?” Harry asked, confused. If Dumbledore wanted to keep his hold on the wizarding world, surely he’d need to keep the Ministry under his thumb?

“Oh, he’ll keep some of his people in there. Those who manage to hide their allegiance, or are too valuable to fire. But think of it this way, Harry; the Ministry is going to fall, sooner or later. With Fudge at the helm, it’s a sinking ship. How will it look if everyone on Albus Dumbledore’s side is removed from their jobs, and then the Ministry crumbles?”

It all began to make sense to Harry. “It’ll look like Dumbledore’s people were the ones keeping it afloat,” he realised. “Then when it’s all over, the Ministry will be handed to Dumbledore’s people to fix it again.” The prospect made him nauseous.

“Albus has been playing this game for longer than the three of us have been alive, combined,” Snape pointed out, lips in a thin line. “It is dangerous, for us to try and play against him.”

“It’s a risk worth taking,” Harry insisted. “People will die if we don’t. *I’ll* die if we don’t. I refuse to let him use me or anyone else to further his own gains.”

“How have things been going on your end?” Remus questioned, reaching for another scone. “What has the school been like, in the wake of... everything.”