

Ron tried to stare the group down, but he was no match for Ernie's deadeye expression, and he broke away first, flushing angrily. "Come on, 'Mione, let's find somewhere quieter," he muttered, already turning away. Hermione huffed, shutting the door hard in her wake.

There was a beat of silence, then Hannah giggled.

"You're at that point, then, are you?" she asked, linking her fingers with Ernie's in the stocky Hufflepuff's lap.

"I've been *beyond* that point half the summer," Harry groaned. "Once I moved in with them, they spent the whole month alternating between being pissed off at me, and trying to be my best friends again. I'm sick of it."

"So you're done pretending with them? Neville checked, and Harry nodded.

"I don't care if they think it's *teenage angst*, I've got *actual* friends to be hanging out with now."

"Can't say I'm surprised," Ernie mused. "They weren't exactly proper friends to you last year. What were they expecting?"

Harry hummed in agreement — Dumbledore would likely have something to say about it, but Harry couldn't be bothered to care anymore. If the old man wanted him to stay friends with Ron and Hermione, he wouldn't have let them ignore Harry for the first half of summer.

Though there was no reappearance from the two Gryffindor prefects, the compartment slowly emptied as people left to greet other friends, until once again it was just the three Gryffindors and Luna. Harry stretched his legs out, propping socked feet up on the seat opposite. Sometime soon, they'd have to change into their robes, but there was a little more time yet.

Just as he was beginning to consider a nap, there was yet *another* knock on the compartment door.

"Merlin, we're popular," Ginny remarked — only to freeze when a head of platinum blond hair snuck in.

Harry couldn't help the grin that stretched across his face, though at a swift kick to the ankle from Neville, he quickly schooled it into something less lovestruck. "I was wondering if you'd show up. Chill out, Ginny; we're friends now. I'll explain later, promise."

Luna didn't seem to even notice the interruption, engrossed in the *Quibbler* once more. Ginny eyed Draco suspiciously, but eventually nodded. "You and your secrets, Potter," she grumbled.

"Those never-ending secrets," Draco agreed drily. "I can't stay long. I told Crabbe and Goyle I was going to the bathroom." Harry snickered, sitting up straight so Draco could perch on the seat beside him. It was torture, having him so close and having to maintain a friendly distance. "I just wanted to confirm that myself and the others will still come to study group when we can."