

“Oh, he didn’t,” Harry replied, shrugging. “But it sounds like something he would do, doesn’t it?”

Parvati giggled. Beside Harry, Draco rolled his eyes. “Add in too many false rumours and it’ll backfire on you,” he warned, but Harry wasn’t bothered.

“The rest are all real.” The current topic of gossip in the school was Dumbledore trying to corner Sully to ask about their parents — and constantly misgendering them in the process. It was a foolish move on Dumbledore’s part — those who knew the truth of the Fawleys’ allegiances would know Dumbledore was sticking his nose in and clam up, while those who thought the Fawleys were still light would think Dumbledore was getting too paranoid in his old age.

Along with the number of rumours revolving around Dumbledore’s withered hand, there was a growing consensus that the headmaster was finally losing it.

Harry couldn’t be happier.

“Have you thought up an excuse to get out of Slughorn’s Christmas party, yet?” Blaise asked, directing an amused look at Harry, who blinked.

In the drama of the horcrux, he’d entirely forgotten Slughorn announcing his plans for a Christmas party at the supper the night before. “Oh, fuck. I’m gonna have to go, aren’t I?”

Daphne cackled. “Don’t look so smug, darling,” Blaise warned. “I’m dragging you in with me. We’re allowed to bring a guest to this one.”

“I hate you,” the blonde Slytherin announced, but Blaise just winked.

“Slughorn’s letting us have a plus one?” Harry asked, surprised. He must have zoned out through that part of the announcement. “Well, that might make it a little more bearable.” He turned to Draco, grinning teasingly. “You want to finally see what all the fuss is about?” he joked.

Draco gave a thoughtful frown, then nodded. Harry choked. “Alright, then,” Draco agreed, eyes sparkling. “It can’t be any worse than some of the parties my father used to throw.”

Blaise, Theo and Daphne all nodded in vehement agreement, but Harry was too busy staring incredulously at his boyfriend. “You— really? You’d go with me?” He suddenly looked doubtful. “Like, as a friend, or...?”

Grey eyes softened. “I think we’ve both had enough of that ruse, don’t you?” he mused wryly. “I’m ready if you are.”

Harry swallowed thickly. This felt like part of a much bigger conversation — a conversation they really shouldn’t be having in front of their entire friend group. But at the same time, it seemed so simple; Draco was right, they were both tired of pretending.

Was Slughorn’s Christmas party really the best place to go public, though?