

everything. If Dumbledore pressed them to do some kind of magic on Harry *for his own good*, there was little he could do to escape it.

“If you need to, you can always fake friendship with them,” Remus pointed out. “It’ll add another burden to your shoulders, but it might be necessary to keep you safe.”

A noncommittal hum sounded in Harry’s throat. Then his brow furrowed, as another long-brewing thought finally surfaced aloud. “Do you think Dumbledore has spelled them, like he did me?” He hated how hopeful he sounded. “Put compulsions on them to make them treat me a certain way?” If he hadn’t had the security of his other friendships through his fourth year, Ron’s treatment of him after his name came out of the Goblet would have devastated him — he would’ve been desperate to take the redhead back by the time he deigned to apologise. Would Dumbledore go that far, to keep Harry vulnerable?

Remus sighed, running a hand through his hair. “It’s possible,” he admitted, though he sounded doubtful. “There’s a meeting before dinner if you like. I can have Severus stay and try to check them.”

Harry raised his eyebrows. “Would Snape actually be willing to stay for dinner, *here*?” The man was always one of the first ones to leave when Order meetings ended. Harry hadn’t seen him for more than five minutes in total since he’d left Seren Du.

A small, fond smile flickered across Remus’ face. “He will if I ask him,” he assured, and Harry grinned.

“He’d do anything if you asked him,” he teased, watching the werewolf blush. It was strange, to think of Severus Snape in such a way, but it was absolutely true; if there was one thing Harry had learned in the last year, it was that the Slytherin would live and die at the behest of Remus Lupin.

“Alright, enough of that,” Remus muttered, nudging Harry’s shoulder. “Unless you want me to mention the list of things Draco would be willing to do for you.”

It was Harry’s turn to blush, and he shook his head. “I’ll stop,” he promised. “But... if Snape wouldn’t mind, that would be great.” At least then he would know. Then he could stop hoping.

“He might even enjoy it; getting to torture Gryffindors even in the summer,” Remus joked. “It’ll be good for you, too — blow off some steam with someone who won’t treat you like glass.”

Harry couldn’t deny, that sounded good. He hadn’t expected to miss Snape’s bluntness so much, but after having half the house pussyfoot around him — even Remus and Sirius sometimes, though they tried not to — he couldn’t *wait* to snipe at someone who would be equally sharp in return.

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