

“Please don’t do that again, Harry,” Ernie said with a weary sigh. “I was in the shower and you frightened the life out of me.”

“Sorry,” came Harry’s sheepish reply. “Emergencies only in future, promise.”

Susan squeezed his hand, then stepped up to the door and knocked. “Come in!” McGonagall called, freezing in place when she saw how many students awaited her. She was sat at her desk, quill in hand, writing what looked like a stack of letters.

Condolence letters, Harry realised with a sick twist of his stomach, for the families of students who had fallen in battle.

“If you’re about to disrupt my day, Potter, you and your friends can come back in an hour,” she said flatly. Harry snorted.

“We’re not. At least I don’t think we are,” he promised. “We just need a quick word.”

All of them filed into the room, Susan almost tripping over the chair opposite the desk. She gave McGonagall the same information she’d given Harry, about the meeting gathering in the morning. “All of us are eligible to claim our seats, and fully intend to do so tomorrow. But Harry said we should run it by you first, since it means we’ll need to leave school sometimes and whatnot. I know Dumbledore *strongly encouraged* students to keep proxies until they graduated,” she made a face, “but that really isn’t going to sit well with us, Headmistress. All due respect, of course.”

McGonagall’s lips twitched. “Indeed,” she said dryly. “Well, Miss Bones, you’ll be pleased to hear that I have no intention of putting my nose in where it doesn’t belong; I am your headmistress, not your guardian. As long as your duties to your family do not begin to impede your studies, you’ll have no trouble from me or any of the staff about it.” Her eyes flashed. “It’s about time I took my own seat, after all.”

That reminded Harry of something he hadn’t even realised until that very moment. “What about the Hogwarts seats?” he blurted. “I— technically they’re ours. But they usually come with being head of the school...” Sure, they all had other seats of their own, but...

“If the founders’ magic has risen within you, it is for more reasons than just protecting this school from danger,” McGonagall said evenly. “Far be it from me to argue with that sort of magic. All four of you should claim your seats, as is your birthright. Though Miss Lovegood may need to come of age, first, despite the... interesting circumstances behind all this.”

“Luna’s making me her proxy,” Daphne volunteered. “If the hall allows it.”

Harry swallowed thickly, wondering if anyone had found Mr Ollivander yet.

“That’s settled, then,” McGonagall assented, nodding firmly. “I look forward to watching the lot of you turn the entire Ministry on its head.” The amusement returned in the barest curl of her smile. “Now, if you’ve nothing else to discuss, I have quite a lot of work to be getting on with.”