

“Can’t be too hard, if you manage it,” Harry teased, yelping at George’s elbow dug into his ribs. “It all sounds a bit too easy, though. I mean... we don’t even know if their parents are dead, do we?”

George’s smile faded, eyes growing serious. “Tonks and Kingsley are looking into it, but... it’s not looking encouraging.”

A lump formed in Harry’s chest. “Fuck. That’s terrible.” No matter how great it would be for Sirius and Charlie to adopt some kids, they would all much rather their parents be alive. “What about the other two? Frankie and Kevin?”

“Kevin ran in an attack — he’s known his parents were gone for a while now, but he just got back in touch with an aunt who’s going to come take custody of him.” George’s lips pursed. “We haven’t found Frankie’s older brother, but the kid told us to stop looking. Blaise said Frankie was on the house watch list even before things went to shit; when he didn’t show up to school, they assumed the worst.”

Harry grimaced — Slytherin house, by nature, tended to get more abused kids than any other house. They were keen-eyed for the signs, and Frankie being on the watch list didn’t bode well.

Everything he’d heard about the third year boy hit a little too close to home, for Harry’s liking.

The dour turn of the conversation was interrupted as Ginny and Neville finally arrived, and everyone had to squeeze in a bit tighter to make room. Draco took the opportunity to place a hand on Harry’s knee, quirking an eyebrow in his direction. “You okay?”

Of course he’d been keeping one ear on Harry’s conversation. He was a Slytherin, after all. “Fine,” Harry assured, covering the blond’s hand with his own.

Draco didn’t look convinced, but he let it drop, turning his hand over to hold Harry’s as he went back to his conversation with Daphne and Sullivan.

They stayed at the Three Broomsticks for lunch, their table easily the loudest in the room — other Gryffindors dropped by to say hello to the graduates, not to mention a few of the heirs and their assorted social groups. It was quite possibly the most jovial crowd Harry had been part of since his birthday party; even at New Year’s, there had been the strong undercurrent of melancholy, the awareness that the coming year would bring a lot of dark things.

This was just light, simple, easy fun with his friends. Catching up with his old teammates, getting the gossip from the outside world, trying not to laugh as the twins teased Neville and Ginny hexed them under the table in retaliation.

Because of that, Harry didn’t notice the screaming at first. None of them did.

Then there was a thunderous crack from outside, and conversation died in an instant. Harry looked around his friends, colour draining from his face. “The wards,” he realised in horror. “We’re under attack.”