

The decision was taken out of his hands, however, when he stepped out of the portrait hole to be greeted by Neville Longbottom's smiling face — and a sausage sandwich wrapped in a napkin, which was quickly shoved his way. "Brought you this," Neville said by way of greeting. "Figured you wouldn't fancy going down to breakfast."

"Neville, you're a godsend," Harry declared, accepting the sandwich graciously. "Is it bad down there?"

Neville winced. "It's... not great." That admission meant it was likely *terrible*, and Harry cursed. It would be second year all over again, only instead of thinking he was out to kill them, half the school merely thought he was trying to steal the limelight and break the rules. Fantastic. "Want to go for a walk?" Neville offered. Harry nodded; anything to avoid the crowds of people.

Harry didn't have his cloak, but he did have his Silverling's jacket on, so the pair of them headed down to the Entrance Hall and out to the grounds. Everyone they passed stared at Harry, and whispers followed in his wake. It was awful.

"Of course I knew you didn't do it," Neville said with a roll of his eyes, when Harry asked if the round-faced boy believed him. "You hate attention. Ron's still being an idiot about it, though — I don't think he really believes you did it, but he's jealous all the same." The taller Gryffindor snorted. "If he was going to have an issue with being sidelined, he shouldn't have befriended the Boy-Who-Lived," he added in a mutter. "Maybe he thought being friends with you would get him some glory of his own."

The offhand remark reminded Harry suddenly of the letter from Gorrak, and the revelation about Mrs Weasley. *Some glory of his own...* The pieces were coming together, and Harry didn't like the picture they were making.

He glanced around. They were by the lake, not far from where Harry had sat with Draco the day before, and there was no one around. "Neville," he said slowly. "I know I've asked you to keep a lot of secrets for me so far. But there's a few more I haven't told you yet. Can we— would you sit down with me for a bit?" He gestured to the tree he'd sat by yesterday. Neville's face was serious.

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, Harry," he said. "It's okay." Harry shook his head.

"No, I want to. I trust you." He did — Neville had proven himself a solid friend in the last year, and Harry hated to think there were things Ron and Hermione knew that he didn't. Besides, maybe the other boy could help him make sense of it all. He needed people on his side.

The two of them settled down at the base of the tree, facing each other, and Harry put up the strongest privacy wards he knew. Only then did he tell Neville everything — about Sirius and Remus, everything that had happened the year before and over the summer, right up to the letter from Gorrak. Neville listened patiently, his face going through a myriad of emotions. The only thing Harry didn't tell him was the truth about Snape's relationship with Remus, and his status as a Death Eater spy; some secrets weren't his to share.