

everything he'd done for Harry, letting the elf think that Harry had just forgotten about him... it didn't sit right with him.

"Dobby... Dobby would like that, very much." He bit his lip. "But Dobby needs to think about Winky, too. She is still not happy being a Hogwarts elf."

"Of course." Well, there was only one real answer for that. "I don't think I'll have enough work for one elf, let alone two, but Winky can come if she wants, too."

Immediately, Harry had a pair of skinny arms wrapped around his legs. "Harry Potter sir is too kind!"

Harry Potter sir was very tired, and only vaguely aware of what he was doing, and would really like to finish his essay and go to bed. He patted the top of the tower of hats, gently disentangling the elf from his person. "It's two years away. Plenty of time to make a decision. But the offer is there."

Plenty of time for Harry to figure out what the hell he'd do with two house elves, too.

Draco would know what to do. He'd sort it out.

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Despite — or perhaps because of — Hagrid's reassurance that he could handle Umbridge, Harry felt nothing but trepidation when that obnoxiously dainty little '*hem, hem*' sounded while Hagrid was showing the class some thestrals.

The half-giant greeted her cheerfully; if Harry didn't know better, he'd say the man was entirely oblivious to what she clearly thought about him.

Then again, Harry supposed, Hagrid was probably used to people thinking certain things about him, and having to interact with them anyway.

His fists clenched at his sides as Umbridge spoke to Hagrid with slow, exaggerated words and near-comical hand gestures. Hagrid took it all on the chin, smile not even faltering.

"Are you aware," Umbridge continued, "that the Ministry of Magic classifies thestrals as dangerous?"

"Aye," Hagrid said, nodding genially. "They can be. But Hogwarts has had a permit for the thestrals to pull the carriages since about nineteen-fifty-summat. Only domesticated herd in Britain!" he declared proudly. Umbridge did not look nearly as impressed.

Things quickly went downhill as she began to walk amongst the students — it was clear that even if Hagrid had been an exemplary teacher, she had made her mind up about him. It didn't help that the Slytherins — Draco looking apologetically at Harry when no one else was watching — were on fine form, regaling Umbridge with all the *dangerous* things Hagrid had made them study, and how difficult it was to understand him.