

There were a few chuckles around the table, but Albus' lips only twitched briefly. "Glad to hear it. Although — I heard several of the students mention that Harry had been talking to strangers in the village."

"He stopped to chat a moment," Kingsley assented, face as impassive as always. "Him and the Malfoy lad."

"What did he ask about?" Albus pressed.

"Nothing in particular. Just wanted to say hello, ask how everyone was doing outside the castle. Like I said, he only stopped for a moment."

"He said hi to me in the Three Broomsticks," Tonks volunteered. "But there weren't any free seats, so they left after one drink."

"Just him and the Malfoy boy?" Moody asked suspiciously, bright blue eye fixed on Tonks. "Didn't meet any of his other friends there?"

"Not that I saw."

Moody's lips thinned. "Boy's headed down a dangerous path."

"The Malfoys are on our side," Sirius cut in, irritation clear in his voice. "Narcissa has more than made amends for what she was forced to do while her husband was alive. There's no reason Harry and Draco shouldn't be friends."

Moody scowled, but before he could say anything Albus cleared his throat. "Harry's friendships aside," he cut in, "you must not draw such attention to yourselves. And you must be careful what you say to him. All of you," he added, surveying the group with that condescending, disappointed-grandfather face that made Remus' hackles rise. "I understand that Harry is used to seeking out information for himself — and indeed, seems to have decided he no longer wants the information I am willing to give him — but you must be careful what you say in front of him. We cannot be certain he can be trusted."

"Oh, not this again," Sirius groaned loudly. "Give it a rest, Albus. He doesn't have Voldemort in his head!"

"The nature of Harry's connection with Voldemort is strange and mysterious magic, Sirius," Albus insisted. "With the recent changes in his behaviours, it is not something we can rule out entirely. Even if Harry himself is not aware of the influence, it could be affecting him."

"That poor boy," Molly fretted. "Ron and Hermione are so worried about him — he won't even talk to them anymore!"

Remus stifled a snort; worried, sure. So worried they were calling him a blood supremacist to anyone who might listen. But they wouldn't have told Molly about that.

It wasn't the first time the argument had come up in an Order meeting — indeed, as the same old points were hashed over for the dozenth time, Sirius getting increasingly furious in defence of his godson. Remus wondered how much longer the Order could last. He could see