

And below that;

*Dear Mr Potter,*

*I'm glad to hear from my grandson that you're finally learning about your place in our world. I have to say, it doesn't surprise me that it was kept from you until now.*

*I hope this book is of assistance; please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions. Well met, and happy Yule.*

*Lady Augusta Longbottom*

*P.S. If you get the chance this summer, I would recommend going to Gringotts and checking your family vault for a book on traditions and magics specific to House Potter. Every family should have one. If you are in need of an adult to escort you, I would be happy to do so.*

Again, Harry quickly hid the book and the note from Ron's curious gaze, but a smile tugged at his lips. He was glad now for the Herbology book he'd sent Neville, unsure if they were at the level of friendship to be exchanging Christmas gifts.

Those seemed to be the only unexpected gifts in the pile — at least, until he reached the long, narrow package at the very bottom. His heart clenched at the telltale shape. "Mate!" Ron breathed, barging over and reaching to tear the wrapping paper.

A Firebolt.

This Christmas was just full of surprises.

.-.-.-.

With his spirits high from his pile of gifts, Harry was caught almost entirely off-guard as his name was called. He was having a rare moment alone — with Hermione in the library and Ron kidnapped by the twins — and enjoying taking his time wandering down to Christmas lunch, turning his thoughts over in his mind. At least, until he was stopped, and his heart sank.

"Harry, my boy!" Dumbledore's fond call rang through the stone corridor. Harry froze, turning on his heel. The headmaster was dressed in festive robes and smiling widely, oblivious to the nausea rolling in his student's stomach.

*Don't look him in the eye*, Harry thought to himself desperately, plastering a smile on his face and fixing his gaze somewhere over Dumbledore's left shoulder. "Hello, sir!" he greeted cheerfully, trying to think how he might have acted before the compulsion was removed. Trusting, impulsive, thoughtless. He could do that. Maybe.

"Not spending the day with your friends?" Dumbledore asked, brows furrowing. Harry shrugged.

"Hermione's finishing an essay. Ron's with his siblings, I didn't want to interrupt."