

“It’s the first war all over again,” Sirius murmured grimly, a hand on Harry’s shoulder as they hurried towards Flourish and Blott’s. Luckily the bookshop was still open, though the only other customers seemed to be Hogwarts students.

They bought Harry’s new books quickly, then headed over to Malkin’s to get him measured up. The usually chatty witch was almost silent as she worked, her face lined and her eyes darting fearfully towards the doors. She didn’t look Harry in the eye, not once in the entire time he was in there.

It was something Harry was beginning to notice — though there were far fewer people in the alley than usual, all of them seemed wary of him. It hurt, realising how deep Dumbledore’s claws had gotten into all of them, how easy it had been to convince them that Harry was under some sort of mysterious dark influence.

Harry tried not to let it bother him — he had plenty of people supporting him, after all — but it still weighed on him inside. It was going to be another difficult start to the school year, if everyone thought he was dangerous again.

To cheer them all up, and to kill time while Madam Malkin made Harry’s robes, the three of them headed to Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes. It was easily the busiest shop in the entire alley; there was something to be said for seeking laughter in a time of fear.

The twins seemed a little star-struck at having both remaining Marauders in their shop at once, practically tripping over themselves to show Sirius and Remus some of their new products. Harry hung back with Angelina near the till, watching in amusement.

“Congrats on the badge by the way, Captain,” she said teasingly, grinning at him. Harry blushed.

“Katie told you?”

“When she gave the letter to McGonagall to pass to you, yeah. Made us all promise not to tell you ’til you got the badge.” Angelina winked. “Didn’t want to ruin the surprise.”

“I’m just glad I get to play again full stop, let alone captain the team!” Harry had truly been worried that the Ministry would have found a way to keep Umbridge’s ban in place, just to spite him for making them look bad.

“You’ll do great,” Angelina assured. “You’ve got a lot of work ahead of you, but at least you’re not rebuilding the entire team.” He still had Katie, and Vicky, and even Ginny. “I have every faith you’ll keep the Gryffindor win streak going.” Her gaze grew devilish, and she smirked. “You’ll have me and Ollie to answer to if you don’t.”

Harry snorted. “Aye, Captain.” He would do his best.

“Just do me a favour and don’t put those idiot beaters from the Ravenclaw match back on the team,” Angelina added, making a face.

“I might not have much choice.” If no one even halfway decent tried out, he’d be screwed.