

Harry was glad there was someone else who didn't care about being passed over for prefect, shifting over to make room for her so she could shut the door properly.

"How's it all going? I have the notes for you, by the way." The enormous stack of parchment with all his notes on the laws Susan had asked him to look at was safely in his trunk, where it had been since he'd left Seren Du. The Hufflepuff's face lit up.

"Brilliant. It's going well, actually; everyone's been way more helpful than I anticipated. Of course, there's only so much I can do at this stage — but you keep assuring me you've got my roadblocks handled," she teased.

"One at a time, I'll get to them," he joked in reply — just a controlling headmaster and a Dark Lord to do away with, nothing major.

"Good lad." Her smile dropped, and she rested her hand on Harry's arm for a moment. "My aunt told me about what happened to your cousin. I'm so sorry, Harry."

A lump rose in Harry's throat, and he cleared his throat. "Thanks. It— yeah, it wasn't great. I just can't believe a dementor actually got that far."

Susan's face darkened. "Aunt Amelia's furious. Fudge and Scrimgeour — he's the head of the aurors — keep telling her it was just a rogue dementor, that there's no need to look into it now it's been contained. As if a *rogue dementor* would get that far and only Kiss one person on the way." Her mouth set in a grim line. "I wish there was more we could do to get justice for you."

"Knowing your aunt even tried is help enough," Harry assured — even if the rest of the Ministry was corrupt as hell, it was nice to know he had an ally in Amelia Bones.

The atmosphere brightened when another knock on the door heralded Lavender and Parvati, who stayed for a while to talk to Harry and Ginny about their summer in India with Parvati's family. Susan left, but Anthony Goldstein swung by with Michael Corner, whose presence had Ginny blushing and Neville's jaw clenched painfully tight. Blaise and Daphne even stopped in briefly; in fact, the only one of the heirs group who *didn't* make an appearance was Cassius. Something that had the worry in Harry's stomach growing sharper — if he didn't know that Draco had written to the older boy regularly throughout the summer, he'd wonder if Cassius was even on the train.

They had obviously been side-tracked on the way back from the prefects meeting — or perhaps just hadn't been keen to find Harry again, which was fine by him — as when Ron and Hermione found them, Hannah and Ernie were in the compartment, along with Sullivan Fawley who was deep in conversation with Luna and Ginny about something.

"Where are we supposed to sit?" Hermione asked, dragging her trunk along behind her. Harry wondered why she hadn't shrunk it yet.

He shrugged. "Sorry, we're a bit full in here. Maybe there's room in one of the other compartments?"