

“I know this must be upsetting,” he said, his voice calm and even. “I promise you, the Ministry is doing everything it can to get to the bottom of this situation.” Harry doubted that. “We merely need to ask you some routine questions. You say you stayed home all day?”

“All day, every day,” Harry confirmed, trying to keep most of the bite out of his tone. From what he knew, Shacklebolt was part of his guard; he would know that already. An unreadable look crossed the bald wizard’s face.

“Right. You didn’t notice anything unusual? A cold spell, flickering lights?”

“I didn’t notice any of the usual signs of dementors, no.” Harry folded his arms over his chest. “I had the lights off, anyway. I was trying to get an early night.” An easy lie. The lightbulb in his room hadn’t worked in years. The lights were always off.

“An *early night*, on a Saturday in the middle of summer?” Runcorn sneered.

“I don’t sleep well, these days,” Harry snapped in reply. “Nightmares.” He thought he saw a smirk cross the man’s face for the barest of moments. Shacklebolt, on the other hand, looked sympathetic.

“Understandable, after... what happened. Your aunt and uncle didn’t notice anything?”

“Not that I know of. But I haven’t spoken to them much this evening.” If Shacklebolt *was* part of the Order — part of Harry’s guard — then he likely knew about the difficult relationship between Harry and his relatives. But Harry refused to give Runcorn the satisfaction of any kind of insight into his home life. There was something about the man that put his back up, his magic itching in disgust. “What are they being told?”

“At the moment, the muggle doctors are telling them what they believe to be true; that your cousin suffered a spontaneous brain bleed that has caused him to go catatonic, and left him in a vegetative state. Mr Runcorn and I will wait here with you for them to return, and explain things properly to them.”

Harry grimaced. “I would really rather you didn’t.”

“We won’t be an imposition—” Shacklebolt started, but Harry shook his head.

“Not that. Telling them about the dementor. My aunt and uncle... they aren’t fond of magic.” He flicked his gaze to Runcorn, unsure how best to word things. “It confuses them. Scares them a bit, I think. All my aunt really knows of magic is that it killed my parents. If she knows it killed her son, too... it would devastate them.” And they would murder him, because they would assume it was his fault. Which it sort-of was; the dementor certainly wasn’t there randomly.

“That is highly unusual, Mr Potter,” Runcorn began.

“I’d say it’s an unusual situation, Mr Runcorn,” Harry retorted waspishly. “Please, if you’ve any decency, let my aunt and uncle believe their son suffered a tragic and unexpected natural death. Let them mourn their son without adding the confusion of magical creatures to the