

## Chapter 46

At this point, Harry felt like he deserved a medal for not hexing Ron Weasley into a gibbering puddle of sludge. Hermione was almost as bad, but she was thankfully distracted by Mrs Weasley declaring the library ‘safe’. With less than two weeks left before she was back at Hogwarts, the young witch was determined to read as much as humanly possible.

In-between harassing Harry about the state of his summer homework, his future revision schedule, and anything else she could think to pick at, of course.

Ron just continued to talk to Harry as if they were still best friends, crowing about how great it would be to be back at school and how Harry would kick the Slytherins’ arses at quidditch with his Firebolt. The obsession with dominating the other houses — especially Slytherin house — was wearing on his nerves.

Harry had to wonder what their angle was — if they had been told by Dumbledore to continue befriending him, was this really the way they thought to do that? Sure, it might have worked when they first met, but he was eleven and drowning in compulsion charms then! He would’ve befriended a statue if Dumbledore’s spells had directed him to.

It was becoming incredibly clear to him that there was a reason the pair had no friends outside of each other, and Harry.

“Surely this is too much, even for them,” he mused to Remus one afternoon, hiding in the werewolf’s bedroom. “If they really wanted to try and be friends again, I’d have thought they’d try it a bit more gently.”

“I don’t think either of those two know what gentle is,” Remus replied dryly. “It does seem odd, though. Hermione’s a smart girl, she should’ve realised making you angry isn’t likely to endear them to you.”

“She just thinks I’m *struggling with my feelings*,” Harry muttered, recalling something he’d overheard her saying to Tonks when she thought Harry couldn’t hear. “The only feeling I’m struggling with is the one telling me to punch Ron.”

Remus snorted, shaking his head. “At least you’ve got Ginny and the twins.”

Harry made a face — he did, but the twins were locked in their room at all hours frantically trying to develop more joke products for the upcoming school year, and spending time with Ginny by herself was causing Mrs Weasley to make all kinds of uncomfortable comments.

“I’m worried about what Dumbledore might have Ron and Hermione do if I’m not friendly with them again soon,” he confessed, finally speaking aloud something that had been niggling at him for a while now. “I mean, he clearly knows his compulsions have failed. If he tries more, or...” Harry didn’t like to think about how far the headmaster might be willing to go. Ron and Hermione had access to him in Gryffindor Tower; his dorm, his trunk,