

He blinked — waiting by Pomfrey's triage tent were Draco, Katie and Blaise. "I..." He trailed off, looking back down at the cloth-covered bodies. "I'm sorry I didn't save them, Professor."

McGonagall's lips pursed, her fingers tightening on his shoulder. "Far more of them would have died had you not been here, Potter. Unfortunately, even the best of us cannot save everyone."

He gave a stiff nod, barely a jerk of his chin. He understood that, but it didn't stop the guilt. The Death Eaters had come for him, after all.

McGonagall released him, and he headed for his friends, stumbling a little as his quivering muscles began to protest a little too much, the ache in his hip turning sharp with every step. Now the adrenaline was starting to wear off, he was starting to realise he was not quite as unscathed as he'd thought.

"Don't make me send you back to the castle on a stretcher, Potter," Pomfrey called, not looking up from the patient she was dealing with.

"Oh, for Godric's sake," Katie huffed, stepping in front of Harry and turning her back to him. "Go on, on you get."

He stared. "Sorry, what?"

"You're no heavier than my little brother, and I give him piggybacks all the time. It's me or a stretcher; you're in no shape to make that walk under your own power."

Blaise had his arm in a sling, and Harry could admit there was no way Draco was strong enough for that. He groaned.

"This is ridiculous," he muttered. "I can walk!"

"Me or the stretcher," Katie reminded. "So button it, Potter."

Harry could count on one hand the number of times he'd been given a piggyback. But that was how he left Hogsmeade after his heroic battle against the Death Eaters — clinging to the back of Katie Bell, body slowly making its protests known, too tired to even argue at this point.

He would get Draco back for laughing at him, though. After he'd had some sleep.

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Dinner that evening was a subdued affair. To no one's surprise, McGonagall announced that all future Hogsmeade weekends were cancelled for safety reasons. There was a small group of quietly crying students at the end of the Ravenclaw table, mourning the two kids that had died.

Harry couldn't look at them without his chest hurting.