

How far they'd come indeed, for Draco Malfoy to genuinely be worried about the safety and wellbeing of Harry Potter.

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The train ride home was a quiet one, especially when he compared it to the one that had brought them to school at the beginning of the year. Harry was surprised at how many people managed to catch him while he was walking to the bathroom at the end of the train, imploring him to keep in touch over the summer. Susan Bones; Parvati Patil; even Daphne Greengrass told him to send her an owl sometime. It felt like he'd stepped into some bizarre alternate universe.

He returned to his carriage with Ron and Hermione, where they were also joined by Neville, Ginny, and a girl with pale blonde hair that Harry didn't recognise. "This is Luna," Ginny said by way of introduction. "She's in my year, in Ravenclaw."

The blonde girl stared at him with a somewhat dazed smile. "Hello, Harry Potter. I'm glad to see you don't have wrackspurts on you this year. They looked awfully uncomfortable last year."

Harry blinked. "Uh. What?" Ginny giggled.

"Luna's a bit... interesting, but she means well," she assured. Harry, who still had absolutely no idea what was going on, merely shook his head and sat down between Ron and Neville. Whatever; if Ginny's weird friend wanted to sit with them, that was fine by him.

"Cheer up, Harry," Hermione said as she watched him stare forlornly at the castle disappearing behind the mountains. "I'm sure we'll be able to see you this summer."

"Yeah, I've been thinking about that," Ron said. "You've got to come stay with us, Harry. It's the Quidditch World Cup this summer, Dad says he can get tickets from work. You can't miss it!"

Harry, who had never been to a live quidditch match but had listened to lots of them on the Wizarding Wireless he'd bought last summer, brightened up considerably at that. "That'd be brilliant. I bet the Dursleys would love to get rid of me." It all boiled down to whether Dumbledore would let him go. Surely he couldn't find an excuse not to? He didn't seem to mind Harry spending time with the Weasleys.

Conversation livened up as Ron and Ginny started debating over which team would win the World Cup, and Harry leaned back in his seat, a small, sad smile on his face.

There had been a whole half hour, a *glorious* half hour, where he'd thought he would be going to live with Sirius when he left Hogwarts this year.

If only that were the case.

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