

“Oh, come off it,” Ginny argued. “No one with half a brain is going to believe this rubbish. I think it’s hilarious, to be honest. Kudos to you, Hermione, for clearly being sexy enough to score two super famous wizards. Sorry I’m such an opportunistic slag that I sunk my claws into Harry as soon as you tossed him aside.” Ron looked like he was going to have a stroke at the language coming from his baby sister’s mouth.

“Quite frankly, I’m offended,” George announced, dropping onto the bench on Ginny’s other side, his twin following. “I spend *way* more time with Harry than Ginny does. Why can’t I be the opportunistic slag?”

“You were too busy sucking face with Durmstrang boys, remember?” Harry pointed out. George pouted.

“Just the one Durmstrang boy, thank you!” he protested. “Who do you think I am, *Hermione*?” This was said with a wink towards the curly-haired girl, and actually startled a laugh out of her.

“I can’t believe you’re laughing about this,” Ron muttered, scowling at his plate of eggs. Harry shrugged.

“The worst thing we can do is give it credibility by being upset about it. Best to just laugh and move on.” No one whose opinion mattered would believe it, and it would die down quicker if they didn’t let it get to them.

Ron didn’t look convinced, and Hermione still didn’t seem sure how to react to the whole thing, but then Ginny grabbed the magazine and started dramatically reading the best (rather, worst) bits, so Harry was too busy laughing to care.

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It was hard, but Harry managed to escape Ron and Hermione long enough to get to the heirs’ meeting a few days later. They were easing up on him a little, after he’d spun a tale about getting a letter from Sirius saying he was somewhere in Ireland, and also told them about seeing Mr Crouch on the map. Even Snape had been confused by that one, but agreed it was fairly harmless on the spectrum of secrets Harry was keeping, and would be a good measure of whether Ron and Hermione had told Dumbledore about the map. He hadn’t said anything directly to Dumbledore yet, but that didn’t seem to be bothering the headmaster, increasing Harry’s suspicions that his two ex-best friends were spying on him. He felt sick every time he thought about it.

He was glad to be in a room full of people who hated the headmaster as much as he did, Susan squeezing his shoulder in sympathy when he told them all about Dumbledore’s plot. “I can arrange for someone to hex Weasley if you’d like,” Daphne volunteered. “Or Granger. I’m sure Pansy would jump at the opportunity.”

“Not Malfoy?” Harry asked with a brow raised. Blaise, Daphne and Cassius shared a glance. Harry’s stomach flipped. “What?”

“Draco has been acting... strange lately,” Blaise admitted.