

“As long as I’m good at it, I don’t really care,” was Draco’s dismissive reply. “I’d probably specialise in spell damage. Counter-curses are always fascinating to me, and I bet there’d be lots of challenging cases. I wouldn’t like to end up delivering babies all day or something.”

Harry made a face; he couldn’t see Draco delivering babies, either. Not that he was completely sure how that all worked, but he couldn’t see Draco doing it.

“Well, at least you’ll get plenty of practice, when we’re older,” he declared. “I’m in the Hospital Wing all the time. I think Madam Pomfrey is considering giving me my own personal bed.”

With a snort, Draco played the card that won him the round, triumph shining in his silver eyes. “It’ll be a while yet before I know the spells to put your sorry arse back together again. Do try not to get yourself killed before then.”

“Alright, I’ll wait,” Harry agreed. He glanced down at his watch; it was getting late, and tomorrow would be a big day. “We should go to bed. I want to be at the top of my game on the pitch tomorrow.”

“Damn right you do, if you’ve got any chance of beating me,” Draco agreed, sending the cards into their box with a wave of his wand. Before he left, he paused, looking back at Harry. A stray lock of blond hair fell into his eyes, and Harry was struck with the strangest urge to push it aside. “Just... be careful tomorrow, Harry. The Slytherins *really* want to win this.”

Harry, who had been fending off low-level attacks from Slytherins for the last two weeks, gave Draco a deadpan look. “Y’know, I’d figured that out.” Hurt flashed in Draco’s eyes, and Harry softened. “I know. I’ll be careful. I’m used to having snakes out for my blood,” he added dryly. “No hard feelings, whatever happens, yeah?”

He held out a hand, and Draco shook it. “No hard feelings when my team crushes yours to dust,” he agreed, yelping when Harry made to jab him in the side. “You’re a barbarian, Potter.”

“That’s what I’ve got you for; keep me civilised,” Harry retorted teasingly. Draco huffed, scowling one last time, then disappeared from the classroom. Throwing his cloak over his shoulders, Harry followed after a few minutes, making the short trek back to Gryffindor Tower.

The light from the half-moon streamed through the large windows, guiding his way back. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry caught a flash of movement, and froze.

Down in the grass, skirting the edge of the Forbidden Forest, was an animal. Harry’s heart leapt into his throat — not the Grim, not now, not tonight — but it was much too small a form for that. He stepped closer to the window, squinting to get a better look. The moonlight passed over dark ginger fur. Crookshanks. Relief flooding through his form, Harry made to turn away, only... Crookshanks wasn’t alone. A huge, shaggy black dog trotted across the lawn, approaching Crookshanks. It pressed its nose briefly against his, then turned back