

Chapter 73

They had to go to breakfast.

Harry knew this. He had to show his face, see the damage from the night before — both at the school and the Ministry. He had to see what the story was before it started twisting beyond his reach.

But *Merlin*, he didn't want to.

He let out a groan of protest, and felt Draco's chuckle rumble through his chest. "Come on," the blond urged. "Best get it over with now. Go to breakfast, check the paper, visit the Hospital Wing, then you can hide again." A kiss dropped to Harry's shoulder. "You know it's necessary."

He did, but that didn't make him any more eager to do it. Still, he reluctantly uncurled himself from Draco's embrace, and reached for his glasses on the bedside table.

"I suppose." It was already nearly nine. Luckily, it was a Saturday. He couldn't imagine having to face more classes after this. Or worse; *exams*.

The Room provided a bathroom, and the pair of them shared a shower, Draco helping Harry wash all the tiny glass particles and debris from his haphazard nest of hair. When they emerged, there were clean clothes waiting for them on the bed, no doubt thanks to one of the house elves. Once he was dressed, Harry's nerves began to rise. Draco reached for his hand, kissing the back of it. "It's going to be fine. Just keep your head up, and use all of that Gryffindor arrogance," he teased. Harry laughed. Then his green eyes softened with concern.

"Will you be alright?" They would have to go to breakfast separately, and Draco would have to deal with the whole school knowing his father had died — more than that, had died a Death Eater, trying to kill Harry Potter.

Draco nodded, and by the time he let go of Harry's hand the Slytherin Ice Prince mask was firmly in place. "I'll see you later," he promised, and then he was gone.

Harry took five long, steady breaths alone in the room, convincing himself not to just turn around and go right back to bed, and then walked out after him.

The school was still in a state of disarray, but the more pressing matters seemed to have been dealt with. Whatever had been on the sixth floor that required the entire staff to fix, there was no trace of it now, and the Entrance Hall was back to rights again — except for one lonely, half-deflated beach ball in one corner. Students stared wide-eyed at Harry as he passed, whispering to one another, but Harry ignored them.

Breakfast, Hospital Wing, Out, he promised himself, repeating the mantra over and over as he stepped into the Great Hall and sent the whole room into an abrupt silence.