

And if he could make as much money as his accounts projected, Farlig's wife would be very happy indeed with his new position. After all, he now worked on commission.

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About done with adventures for the summer, Harry decided to spend the rest of his time in Diagon Alley actually behaving — somewhat. He made no more jaunts into muggle London, but he did make a few more reckless purchases, taking advantage of having no one around to question his spending habits. A new trunk with more space than the old one, even more books, and a small Wizarding Wireless so he could listen to quidditch matches sometimes.

If he was being *really* foolish, he told himself, he would have bought a Firebolt. But he didn't, so no one could begrudge him a little shopping spree. No one had to know how much he'd really bought.

The start of the school term was drawing ever closer, and Harry was keen to make the most of his remaining freedom, wandering around Diagon in his new clothes, getting used to actually wearing things he liked. As the week went on, he spotted more people he knew from school, all there to buy their things for the upcoming school year. He stopped and spoke to some of them, but most he just observed with a small smile, keeping his head down. Until one.

Harry was wandering past Twilfitt and Tattings when he — quite literally — bumped into someone. “Watch where you're going, you filthy— Potter!”

He looked up into the steely grey eyes of Draco Malfoy. Harry winced. “Sorry, I wasn't looking.” He'd been too busy thinking about a passage in one of the books he'd been reading, about the history of the Wizengamot and why the fifty houses had originally been chosen. “Malfoy,” he greeted, bowing his head briefly, keeping his palms open at his sides like the etiquette book had said, to show that he wasn't holding a wand. That seemed to throw the blond boy for a loop, and he blinked, before his eyes narrowed.

“Looks like you're finally learning how to dress yourself, Potter,” he retorted sharply, though he too showed empty palms. “Where's your usual entourage? They finally got sick of you?”

“They're on holiday,” Harry told him. “I've been at the Leaky Cauldron for a while.”

“Alone?” Malfoy's pale eyebrows shot up. “I find it hard to believe Dumbledore's letting you wander around without a babysitter, all things considered.”

“What do you mean, all things considered?” Harry asked, bracing himself for some kind of insult or remark about how he was too stupid to survive by himself.

In reading his new books, Harry had discovered that he'd actually been enormously insulting in refusing Malfoy's hand before the sorting back when they'd started Hogwarts, and it was probably that that got Malfoy's back up around Harry all the time. That and Ron constantly antagonising him. He'd decided to try and be civil instead, and see where that got him; if he could take Malfoy off the list of things he had to worry about, it would make all the other things — like Voldemort, potential danger, and exams — a lot easier to bear.