

“What’s everyone up to today, then?” he asked, peering around the table.

“Actually, pup, I wanted to ask you about that,” Sirius began. His voice wavered with nerves, and he reached across to take Charlie’s hand. Both of them looked worryingly serious, and Harry straightened up. “We, ah, got confirmation yesterday that Mr and Mrs Forrester were killed in what was probably a raid — muggles had it down as a gas leak.”

That was usually the cover-up. Sirius exchanged a weighted look with Charlie, then turned back to his godson. “We... Charlie and I...”

“We’re going to put in the paperwork to adopt the kids,” Charlie finished for him. “They’re confirmed Prewetts by Gringotts, so that’ll smooth things along.” Harry already knew that; the tests had been days ago, sixteen kids in all, and every one of them traced back to a wizarding family somewhere down the line. It turned out Charlie’s Great Aunt Muriel had a squib sister no one had spoken about, put up for quiet adoption as a child.

“They aren’t ready to leave the Pottery yet,” Sirius added quickly. “I don’t think Nash wants to until Frankie has somewhere to go. Which, honestly, might take a while.” The boy was a Yaxley, they had discovered, and there wasn’t a single scrap of that family left elsewhere. As a mouthy little Slytherin with a chip on his shoulder, he didn’t exactly have any friends with families willing to take him in. “But Charlie and I thought we’d go over this afternoon and ask the three of them if they’d like to be family. And then we thought we might go to Grimmauld, for a family dinner. Not the extended, just us lot. The house is empty now, and it’s somewhere familiar to them. A good place for you all to get to know each other better.”

He looked so tentative, the hope on his face so fragile, like Harry might throw a screaming fit and refuse. As if Harry hadn’t been rooting for this since the day Sirius had called him on the mirror and told him about the three kids with curly red hair and familiar blue eyes.

“That sounds like a brilliant idea,” he enthused, watching Sirius light up. “Why don’t you invite Frankie along, too? They won’t want to leave him behind, and we’ve got enough snakes in the family he won’t be overrun. Maybe he’ll warm up to Draco,” he suggested, grinning.

The pair looked surprised. “We hadn’t thought of that. But yeah, why not; the more the merrier, eh? Pretty sure Nashira and Frankie are attached at the hip anyway, by this point. We’ll have to acclimatise him to the family eventually,” Charlie said, snorting.

“Definitely a good idea to start with the Black side of the family,” Remus piped up. “The Weasley side will send them all running for sure.”

Charlie mock-glared. “They happen to think the twins are brilliant, thank you very much.”

“They would,” Severus said with a roll of his eyes. “I dread to think what kind of hellions you two will turn those twins into, even without Fred and George to assist. Perhaps I should plan to retire from teaching by then.”

“Come on, Uncle Sev,” Draco cajoled. “You survived teaching us, how much worse can it get?”