

At his words, several others kneeled as well, offering their wands. Harry coughed uncomfortably.

“There’s no need for any of that,” he insisted, fidgeting under the intensity of all that gratitude. “I just did what was right. If you really want to honour that, help us rebuild. Help each other rebuild. Magical Britain is a small community, in the scheme of things — we need to stick together.”

Luckily, that gained a general murmur of approval, and people got to their feet once more.

Now that Harry had confirmed the good news, the occupants of the Pottery jumped into action, the whole house buzzing with excitement as everyone made plans to return to their houses and contact their loved ones. Harry left them to it, smiling and promising to be in touch if anyone needed anything. At the edge of the wards, he gathered his tired magic for one last apparition.

The crack that heralded his return to Hogwarts was much louder than usual, but he was all in one piece, so Harry counted that as a win. At least, he did until he took a step forward and the world lurched sideways.

“Oh, dear.” A surprisingly strong arm linked through his, keeping him upright, and a delicate floral perfume tickled his nostrils.

Narcissa Malfoy smiled fondly at him, patting his cheek. “Overdone it a bit, have we?” she said knowingly. “I’ll save the lecture for my son.”

Harry groaned. “Do we have to tell him?”

Setting off towards the castle, Narcissa laughed. Harry tried not to lean on her too obviously as they walked. “You had better get used to it. My dragon is awfully protective of those he loves.”

“Understatement of the century,” Harry said, and she laughed again. “How were things at the Manor?” He knew Narcissa had gone to do much the same as him and Sirius — those staying at her house were even less likely to trust the word of the *Prophet*.

“They’re delighted, of course, but... many of them now have family to mourn, even if they’re really quite relieved that family is dead. It’s a difficult situation.”

Harry hummed in agreement, remembering how torn Draco had been when his father died. You could be aware that someone was a foul, bigoted prick, but that didn’t stop them being family. Didn’t stop you remembering the good times as well as the bad.

“At least they can start to move on, now,” he mused.

With the castle in sight, Harry took a moment to survey the grounds ahead. He hadn’t really given it a good look on his way out, too focused on Sirius and their plans. It was... well, it certainly looked like a war zone. All around them the grass was churned up, deep gouges of spellfire cutting through the earth, darker patches of what was definitely dried blood dotted