

was jovial, but he was looking around at the street — at the students who were staring curiously at Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy stood talking to this strange adult.

He was right; they should get inside, try and pretend to be normal students for a while longer.

“Give the rest our love,” Harry said quietly, and Kingsley nodded, bidding them goodbye. The two boys turned away, wincing at the bitter sting of wind on their cheeks.

“Three Broomsticks?” Draco suggested, already headed for the pub. Harry smirked.

“Not Puddifoot’s?” he teased, earning a scowl.

“You couldn’t pay me enough to go in there.”

Harry laughed, the sound ringing through the quiet street, earning them even more strange looks. People seemed surprised that Draco could draw such a bright sound from him.

They didn’t know Draco like Harry did.

The Three Broomsticks was just as busy as they expected it to be, but there was enough space for them to squeeze in at the bar and order a couple of butterbeers. Harry ended up pressed to Draco from hip to ankle, trying not to get jostled by the crowd, stopping himself a dozen times over from putting his hands somewhere inappropriate for mere friendship.

Merlin, pretending to be friends was even more exhausting than pretending to hate each other, sometimes.

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Honestly, Remus was quite surprised he and Sirius were still invited to Order meetings.

The atmosphere in the Burrow was tense — Albus had moved meeting to the Weasley house when it became clear Sirius was not going to rescind his ban against Molly in the Grimmauld wards. Molly seemed equally displeased about having to let Sirius into her house; especially since he and Charlie made no moves to hide their relationship in front of her.

He wondered how Albus couldn’t see the divide within his own people; was he truly that blind, or had he stopped caring? Decided he was so close to defeating Voldemort by himself that the rest of them no longer mattered? The old man seemed more evasive than ever, these days. Severus was right to worry about what he was planning — whatever it was, he wasn’t sharing with the Order, and that was not a good sign.

“Now, I trust everything in Hogsmeade went as planned?” the headmaster asked, once Joseph Hawthorne had finished giving his report on the Ministry. That was another thing; over the last few months Albus had inducted more people into the Order, people the rest of them hardly knew. He claimed it was because all his previous Ministry informants were now out of the job, which was true, but Remus wasn’t sure he trusted these new ones entirely.

“Quiet as a mouse,” Kingsley confirmed. “Clearly the Death Eaters didn’t want to be out in that cold any more than we did.”