

Somehow, it didn't surprise him that Crouch had been 'accidentally' Kissed before a confession could be recorded. He didn't think Dumbledore was surprised, either — it was much easier for the Ministry to stay in denial if the only proof of Voldemort's return was the word of a fourteen year-old boy. When Fudge began to doubt Harry openly, Harry stared the man down.

"I can offer Pensieve memories, if you like," he suggested hoarsely. Fudge began to splutter.

"Highly unusual! I hardly think— as if we could take memories from a boy and expect people to believe it!"

Fudge continued to have his head firmly buried in the sand as he argued with Dumbledore, ignoring the headmaster's suggestions about the dementors and the giants. Harry didn't know why Dumbledore was bothering; they all knew Fudge wouldn't accept Voldemort's return until the man appeared in front of him himself.

Even when Snape showed off his Dark Mark, he refused to believe it, making his excuses to leave. He almost forgot to give Harry his winnings — Harry had entirely forgotten he was owed them. When the Minister left, Dumbledore let out a sigh.

"There is work to be done," he declared. By now, everyone in the room was watching the headmaster. Waiting for him to take over, as he had done in the first war, Harry realised. It made his stomach clench uneasily.

Dumbledore issued orders, and no one hesitated. Though Bill gave Harry a weighted look before he left; he would no doubt be in touch as soon as it was safe. When McGonagall and Pomfrey had both left as well, Dumbledore turned to the bed, giving Sirius a pointed glance. "It is time," he said simply.

Sirius growled quietly, but he shuffled to the edge of the bed and transformed, sitting at Harry's hip. Mrs Weasley screamed.

"Sirius Black!" she exclaimed, raising her wand.

"No!" Harry said, shielding Sirius the best he could. "He's innocent. It's okay!"

"What is *he* doing here?" Harry had almost forgotten that Sirius and Snape were supposed to loathe each other; they were glaring as if they were hoping to set the other on fire with their eyes.

"It is time to put your differences aside," Dumbledore insisted. "You are on the same side now. I will settle for a lack of open hostility."

Harry bit back a laugh as the pair shook hands, gripping tight enough to attempt to break fingers. They were probably enjoying that little act far too much. Beside him, Remus' eyes danced with amusement.

"So... not a mass-murdering lunatic, then?" Ginny piped up, eyeing Sirius warily. Harry smiled wearily at her.