

*Prophet*, again. And Sirius said if you had anything regarding the war to talk about, you should pass it on to him.”

Over Dumbledore’s shoulder, Harry saw McGonagall’s lips purse. “Mr Potter is a minor, Albus; if his guardian — and his legal counsel — have instructed against him meeting with you, I’m afraid as his housemistress I must abide by that. If you must talk with Potter, let me know and I will clear my schedule. Otherwise, I suggest you send a letter to Lord Black.”

There was nothing Dumbledore could say to that without causing a scene; even more of a scene, considering half the hall was watching at this point. Dumbledore smiled tightly, and bowed his head.

“If that is how you feel, Mr Potter, I can only oblige, though it saddens me to do so. If you change your mind, you know where to find me — I believe you will find what I have to say very enlightening indeed.”

Then he continued up to the head table. Harry glanced to McGonagall with a thankful look, but she said nothing, merely nodding and carrying on with her day. Finally able to turn back to his breakfast, Harry sighed, looking at Susan.

“I didn’t think he’d try something so blatant,” he mused in an undertone. Opposite him, the Hufflepuff hummed thoughtfully.

“Maybe he was hoping social pressure would get you. You wouldn’t want to look like there’s a rift between you in public.”

Harry snorted. “If he didn’t want that he shouldn’t have spent half the summer slandering me in the paper.”

“Well there’s no worry of that now,” Padma remarked, the morning’s copy of the *Prophet* open in front of her. “It’s even more of a Ministry mouthpiece than it used to be, these days.”

Several of the heirs shared a grim look — a Ministry mouthpiece was a Voldemort mouthpiece, now.

“Is there anything useful in there, or...?” Neville trailed off, and Padma shook her head.

“More of the same. They’ve suspended Wizengamot meetings until further notice — probably because more than half the seats were absent for the last.”

With Voldemort in charge of the Ministry, it would be as good as suicide for anyone who did not support him to walk into the building. Harry was suddenly very, very glad that Lucius Malfoy had died in the Department of Mysteries back in June; had the Malfoy seats still been under the control of the Dark, it would have been just enough to keep the Wizengamot open and able to pass laws, with a bit of threatening of a few neutral seats.

Narcissa placing the seats firmly out of Voldemort’s reach was the only thing keeping the Dark from having true control of wizarding Britain. For now, the Death Eaters might have