Minerva was quite certain she’d sent for a capable adult dragon protector to keep the students safe and a suitable ghost representative to make sure there were no spies in their midst; not a rude, foul-mouthed dragon-apprentice who seemingly hated wizards with a passion and a half-ghost space nerd who kept complaining about not having enough caffeine at his disposal.

OR

In which it’s 2 am and I’m starved for good crossover fics so I decided to write my own.

More details in the author’s notes.
me, sleep deprived: so i just thought of this new crossover idea and-
literally everyone: stop procrastinating you have like three other drafts to finish
me: i
me: okay, listen
...
okay okay so
im literally half asleep and wrote half of this in five minutes; the rest would’ve been
finished tomorrow. or today. depending on when i post this.
i wanted to try something out with three fandoms that i’ve never seen interact all at once.
i’m a fan of the secret trio but i don’t particularly like RC9GN so i decided to replace it with HP ^-^

quick timeline:
- after DP season three but ignoring the mess that was phantom planet
- like immediately after Hong Kong Longs in ADJL
- fifth year in HP (surprise)

this may or may not remain a one shot, depending on how well it’s received. i don’t have a
set plan for this but i’ve always wanted to write something like this so hopefully it won’t
flop too hard.,

enjoy!!
The boy in front of her was short; he couldn’t have been taller than five feet, and seemed to be swallowed up by the red jacket he wore; his legs were scrawny and his knees knobbly, wearing a pair of jean shorts and grey converse. He bounced on the balls of his feet, either in nervousness or with excitement - Minerva couldn’t tell.

As for his facial features, well. It was clear he wasn’t human: his ears were tapered, his almond shaped eyes a dark brown that seemed to reflect little red lights - and his pupils were slightly oval, not unlike a cat’s - not too mention the way his bottom jaw seemed to jut out, as if his teeth were too big for his mouth. His hair, though not inhuman, was cause for strange looks: black with brown undertones, spiked, dipped in green. The features would hardly be noticeable in large cities full of muggles (where he was likely from), but in a school full of people who dealt with the mythical every day, they were hard to miss.

But he was tiny. Tiny and short. And very, very young. Much younger than she’d expected.

So, she stared.

The boy (he didn’t look like a protector of anything) exhaled through his slightly upturned nose, adjusting his grip on his luggage. He glanced at the stairs behind him as if contemplating whether or not he should run, then shifted his gaze back towards the baffled witch.

“Close your mouth, you’ll catch flies,” he said off handedly, thick brows rising for a moment. His accent was distinctly American, though it was hard to place which region exactly.

Minerva bristled, schooling her features into a curt frown. “Watch your tone, young man.”

The boy glared at her, unafraid. “Listen, lady,” he snapped. “I’m not here to have fun. I’m not here to watch my tone. I’m here because I’m supposed to check up on stupid wizards because I’m the stupid magical protector of the stupid country overseas. The only reason I got fucking Scotland of all places is because someone decided to switch it up a bit and draw straws. Guess which size I got.”

Merlin’s beard. Were all Americans this rude? Minerva would’ve slapped the boy if she weren’t under any obligation to be a good host.

Pushing down the growing resentment, the witch said coolly, “I expected someone much more... mature.”

“Yeah, well. Grandpa isn’t technically a protector anymore. Plus he thought this would be a good ‘learning experience’ and that I needed to ‘let go of my illogical anger towards wizards.’ Whatever. It’s not exactly my call. Not until I complete my training.”

“You-” Minerva felt a growing dread. This wasn’t what was supposed to happen. “You aren’t even out of apprentice-hood yet? How old are you?”

“Fourteen. I’ve still got four more years to go.” A grin made its way across his face, and Minerva could see that his bottom canines were longer, sharper, and - if she remembered her lore correctly - retractable.
She sighed, twisting the urge to pinch the bridge of her nose. “So there’s no one more suitable for the job?”

“If you’re talking about anyone else being the American Dragon, then I’m sorry to say you’re stuck with me. My sister, maybe, but she’s even younger.” His grin turned into a snarl. “I fucking hate drawing straws.”

“Please do not use such language around the students.”

“Hey, if they’re my age, they’ll be swearing even more. Or, wait—” he tapped his chin thoughtfully with a calloused finger. “Y’all are Brits, right? Despite being in Scotland. You’re probably all posh and drink tea. No swearing.”

The child was purposefully trying to grate on her nerves, Minerva decided.

“This luggage is getting heavy,” the dragon-apprentice continued. “Will we be going to our rooms at some point or are we just gonna stay here all night?”

“We are waiting for our other guest,” she explained. They stood right outside the Great Hall, and she could see the boy glancing around her to look at the gigantic doors behind her.

“Huh,” he muttered. “Fine. Well, then. I’ll just sit down. My legs hurt.” And with that, he plopped down on the cold stone floor. Sending a flash of a smile up her way, he added, “Name’s Jake, by the way. Jake Long. Figured you’d want to know what to yell when I’m misbehaving. Because, trust me, I’m completely unsupervised by other dragons here.” He blinked and his eyes turned reptilian, a bright copper color. A grin. “And I hate wizards.”

There was a line, Danny decided, and Clockwork had definitely crossed it.

He’d grown up around the concept of the supernatural and paranormal - ghosts were the largest part of it, but his parents had also loved their mythology books, so Danny had had his fair share of magic.

He much preferred it when it wasn’t biting him in the ass.

Admittedly, the whole going to a magical school thing was exciting, but he didn't exactly have the time for it, what with, you know, keeping his city safe from malevolent spirits.

Clockwork didn't give him a choice on the matter, however, and he supposed the wizened old ghost deserved some credit for not immediately ejecting him to wherever it was he needed to go before saying goodbye to everyone.

"Some powerful allies have asked for my help," Clockwork had told him in the middle of English class (it was a little embarrassing for Danny to admit he hadn't actually noticed everyone in the room was frozen until Clockwork had tapped his shoulder). "Due to the Observants' refusal to let me intervene, I'll be sending my apprentice instead."

"Oh," Danny said, busy staring at Lancer, who had been frozen mid-sentence. "Okay. But, uh. Why are you telling me this? Shouldn't you apprentice be the one to know?"

Clockwork had stared at him blankly, opening his mouth for a moment before snapping it shut. He morphed from an old man into a child. "I... Danny, you're my apprentice."

"What? No, I'm not," Danny replied, turning his full attention towards the Master of Time,
confusion etched across his features.

"Yes. You are."

"But you've never given me a lesson - well, apart from the whole CAT thing, but I'd rather not think about that, and - wait. I'm getting off track."

"I'm your mentor," Clockwork elaborated.

"Oh, yeah, that clears things up. Thanks. I completely understand."

Clockwork sighed. "Daniel. You are under my mentoring because I was able to spare you from the Observants. You are my responsibility, and, in turn, my apprentice. We haven't actively been having lessons, but I assure you I've taught you many things of note."

Danny groaned. "God, I hate your cryptic shit. Just - what is it. What do I need to do, now?"

Clockwork had proceeded to act like an actual teacher and explain magic to him, the war with Voldemort ("That's such a stupid name for a Dark Lord," Danny had said in between snorts of laughter), and Harry Potter's situation after the Triwizard Tournament (he'd sobered up after that).

"I don't get it," Danny said after a beat. Clockwork had explained everything fantastically, saying it in a way that would assure magic would make sense in Danny's mind. "Why do I need to be there? So they're in a war. Wouldn't it be better for you to go and, I don't know, turn back time to fix everything?"

"I cannot intervene," Clockwork repeated, aging once more. "Danny, you have to understand: Amity Park is a ghost central not just because of your parents' portal but also because the muggle ghosts haven't been found by the magical community yet. All there is are rumors. Amity is such a haunted and mysterious place, the wizards tend to stay far away from it. The ectosignatures cancel out most magic, which is why there aren't many undiscovered wizards in that area."

"It's still a lot to take in."

"I know, child. I would prefer you not to know about this at all, and I'd also prefer you don't go to Scotland - the Ministry of Magic isn't very open-minded when it comes to hybrids -"

"Woah, woah, woah. Back up a bit." Danny stood from his seat, glowering at the ghost. "Scotland? Are you insane? I can't go to Scotland. I have -"

"A city to protect, I know." Clockwork pulled at his hood, and Danny would have guessed he looked nervous. "There are other ghost hunters. You also have Danielle. And, if bad comes to worse, I will take care of things. But you must go to Hogwarts."

"But how will I fit in? I'm not a wizard. I don't know spells or potions of whatever cliches there are about these people, and they don't know I'm half ghost. You also haven't answered my question on what the hell I'll be doing there."

"You will not need to hide your ghostly status," Clockwork replied.

"But I thought you said -"

"I will make sure you're safe. Danny, they are allies of mine. They don't entirely understand what I am, but they know I very rarely interfere with their business. For Albus to call me now means something very grave has happened."
"You won't happen to tell me what that something is?"

"I cannot. The Observants are very adamant about keeping out of the wizarding world's business. But-" here he leaned on his staff, age changing again, "-I will ensure that they cannot touch you. You will stay inside Hogwarts for most of the time." A frown flitted onto his face. "A ministry worker may arrive at the school to keep an eye on things. Try to avoid her."

Danny nodded. He felt kind of... numb? Was that the word? Yeah, that'd work. He figured he'd have enough time to scream about today's weirdness once he got home.

"As for what you'll be doing there," Clockwork continued, "Albus has called for two representatives of the supernatural empire to keep an eye out for any dangers to the students, to defend them if something were to happen, to keep them out of harm's way, and to make allies in case of an upcoming war."

Danny stared at him for a moment. "Fuck," he finally managed.

The old ghost grinned slowly. "Fuck indeed."

The two stood silent for a moment, the air heavy with silence. Danny wouldn't ever get used to how dead everything seemed when Clockwork stopped time, the medallion weighing down on his chest. He noticed with some satisfaction that Dash was drooling on his desk. Across the room, a paper airplane had frozen midair.

The rest of the talk had been about fleshing out the details, like when he'd be leaving (a few weeks before summer ends, apparently), how'd he get there (through the Ghost Zone, joy), and what exactly his job would entail.

"Make friends, watch the classes, learn as much as you can about their world," Clockwork had told him. "Do not be afraid to show your ghostly side. Make sure they know you are only there to help."

Danny nodded, then stopped as he thought of something. "You said there would be two representatives, right? Who's the second?"

"A dragon," Clockwork said flippantly, waving his hand in a dismissive matter.

"Like... like Aragon or Dora? They're ghosts, so-"

"No, no. I mean an actual dragon."

"Oh. Isn't that kind of impractical? I'll be sharing a room with this thing, so..."

"Daniel. I do not mean a feral dragon. I mean a Draco."

"A - what? Huh?"

Clockwork sighed heavily. "You'll find out soon enough. He's about your age, though, so you should make friends easily."

"I - okay?" He didn't see how he could easily make friends with a dragon.

Clockwork looked at him again. He morphed into a child. "I will see you in a few months, Danny."

"Wait - you're leaving? But I still-" Too late. A portal opened up behind the Master of Time, and the medallion around Danny's neck
lifted up off his head.

"Time in," Clockwork commanded, and everything unfroze.

Danny braced himself for the sudden influx of noise. Paulina's screeching about Phantom's lastest ghost fight was closest to his ears, and he winced at the volume. Lancer stood at the front, dumbfounded for a second, before spotting Danny and scowling at him.

"Mr. Fenton," the teacher said. "I know there are only a few days left of school, but is it really necessary to try and leave my class early?"

"I wasn't..." Danny realized he had been standing by his desk, looking highly suspicious. "Oh. No. Sorry, Mr. Lancer. I'm... uh." He sat down, face burning.

Stupid Clockwork.

Now, here Danny stood, still very much not done screaming about magic, in front of a castle, of all things.

Sam and Tuck weren't supposed to know about magic, but they were his best friends and there was no way he'd keep this from them. Though Tucker had taken some time convincing, Sam was excited about the prospect of wizards and promised Danny that she'd make sure Amity was kept safe. As for his parents, they were told he was on an internship to NASA. They didn't question it; they were too busy tinkering with another toy designed to destroy him.

The trip through the Ghost Zone hadn't been nearly as horrible as he'd first expected - Wulf had helped him with portal jumping and the ghosts had avoided him, thank God - so he'd reached Scotland in no time; except, of course, the fact that it was now ten in the evening when not moments before it had been four p.m. back in Illinois.

Stupid time difference. There was no way he'd get any sleep tonight.

Danny shifted his luggage to his other hand, nervously tapping his foot on the ground. Should he fly in? knock? Why the hell did they even have a lake right in front of the building? Wasn't that impractical? Especially when there was only a single dirt road leading up to it-what-the-fuck-

The only thing he'd enjoyed so far were the stars above him. He was in the middle of the mountains with no civilization as far as he could tell sans the castle in front of him, leaving a very clear night sky for him to admire; the stars seemed to spin above his head in dozens of colors, making him feel like he was already flying around in space.

Realizing he'd been staring slack-jawed at the stars for several minutes now, Danny hastily turned back towards the giant doors in front of him. He sucked in some air - not like he particularly needed it, but the motion felt familiar - and exhaled slowly, shouldering his bag and walking resolutely up the steps.

What's the worse that could happen, right? He'd already been wrenched from his home life to protect a bunch of wizards he'd only learned about a few months back.

At least he was able to enjoy part of his summer.

Jake hated drawing straws. And having to leave the country. And wizards. Especially wizards.

Okay, so maybe he was a little biased. But, hey, when you have to spend your time at school with a
pompous English wizard and then are forced to go spend *even more* time with probably pompous English wizards, you tend to hold a grudge.

He didn't even get to stay in Hong Kong for the rest of the summer; instead, Gramps had gotten a call from some Bumblebee (at least, that's what it sounded like over the phone) and ordered that Jake and Fu come with him to the the Isle of Draco because there was "an issue in the magical community that could not wait."

Turns out there was a wizarding war brewing and dragons had been asked to protect the different magical schools around the world; yet, instead of just sending the dragons to their respective schools in their *own country*, some jackass had the bright idea of drawing straws instead because no one wanted to go to Hogwarts (the root of the evil, apparently) and to "give the dragons who are next in line a chance to experience what they'd be in charge of for a few months."

(Not that Haley hadn't already been exposed to it all. Jake still laughed at the thought of how stressed Little Miss Perfect had been.)

The point being: Jake was not happy to be there.

"Bumblebee" hadn't even showed up to greet him personally so Jake could give him a piece of his mind. Instead he'd gotten a strict Minerva McGonagall who clearly didn't like him. He couldn't think of a reason why.

While he was simmering in anger and self pity on the cold stone floor, Minerva had taken to pacing in front of the grand doors as they waited for their next guest. They'd been there for about ten minutes now since their chat, and Jake couldn't help but feel a growing resentment for the late representative. He didn't know who or what it was, but Gramps had mentioned interdimensional travel. So. That should be interesting.

Just as he was debating ditching Hogwarts and booking it back to New York, a bang sounded behind him as the door opened and a scrawny figure stepped in. Jake stood up from his perch to watch the newcomer as he hauled his luggage down the hall and up the steps, not seeming to notice the witch and dragon in front of him as he kept swearing under his breath and looking at the ground. The bag looked heavy.

Minerva looked somewhat relieved that the second guest had finally arrived. She cleared her throat, causing the boy's head to snap up, and all the relief vanished from her face to be replaced with shock, then a scowl, and finally resignation.

"Uh, hi," the boy said. He had messy black hair that flopped in front of his face. His skin was pale, like, zombie-pale, and dark circles rested underneath icy blue eyes. The pupils didn't seem to react to the light as he looked up and at Jake. The kid was maybe a few inches taller than him, which really wasn't that great a feat. He wore a light blue long-sleeved shirt with the NASA logo on it and a pair of baggy jeans and black converse. He didn't look much older than Jake.

Jake grinned at him. "Yo."

"Oh, Merlin," Minerva lamented. "How *old* are you? I thought we sent for a Master of Time, who is a *ghost*. Not a... another *boy*."

The kid looked over at Jake with a confused and slightly offended expression. Jake shrugged.

"I, uh," the kid began. He rubbed the back of his neck. "Clockwork sent me instead. He couldn't intervene, something about being bound by the Observants. I don't know. Anyway, the name's
Danny, and I'm, uh, fifteen as of a few weeks."

So he was about a year older than Jake. Great. Maybe he'd have some advice for when he started high school.

"And you're American," Minerva moaned. Her lips became one thin line. "So the Master of Time isn't coming?"

"Who's the Master of Time?" Jake asked, curious.

Danny gave him a look of I'll explain later. "Don't worry, Ms..."

"Call me Minerva."

"Ms. Minerva-"

Jake snorted. The professors only allowed them to be on a first name basis because they were technically supposed to be wizened old magical representatives, not two teenagers.

But. Ms. Minerva. Oh, he'd have a field day with that.

"I assure you I'm completely competent," Danny said with not nearly enough confidence. It sounded more like he was rehearsing lines. "I'm, ah, not a ghost, but as close as you can get, I suppose-"

"Not a ghost?" Minerva stared at him. "I was told there would be a ghost."

"Would you let me finish?" Danny burst out. Jake could barely refrain himself from laughing out loud. Oh, he liked this kid. "I'm what the ghosts - muggle ghosts, I guess - call a halfa. I'm half ghost, half human. Yes, it's possible. I died in one dimension and didn't die in the other. Schrödinger's boy, or whatever you like to call it."

Everyone was silent for a moment.

Danny blushed furiously, and Jake noticed how it seemed to have green undertones. He also had a heavy dusting of freckles on his face, but for some reason the dragon hadn't seen it before. "Um," Danny spluttered. "I. Yeah. Sorry. I, uh. I get tired of explaining it. And I don't really have to keep it secret, apparently, so I figured it was better to get it over with."

Minerva responded with a curt nod. "I'm not entirely sure I understand yet, but I appreciate someone being sent over."

Oh, man. She liked him already. Jake would have to bring him over to the dark side before he was completely brainwashed. It was clear this kid had never been around wizards.

"I have, uh, ghost powers," Danny was saying. "And a ghost form. See-" He raised a fist and it was encased in a green glow. A feeling not unlike static electricity reached Jake, and he involuntarily took a step back.

The witch's interest looked piqued as she leaned forward to inspect the green energy surrounding Danny's fist. "Fascinating," she murmured. "Muggle ghosts are much more unique, it seems."

Looking a bit uncomfortable, Danny extinguished the light and lowered his hand.

Jake cleared his throat. Both people's heads snapped towards him. "Rooms?" he suggested.
Minerva McGonagall nodded. "Yes, of course. This way, if you please." The witch walked by the grand doors and to the hallway, briskly making her way down it without looking back to make sure the two kids were following.

Jake shrugged, glancing sidelong at Danny as they shouldered their luggage to follow the professor. He grinned at the halfa again, showing off his fangs. "I'm Jake Long."

"Danny Fenton," Danny said. He narrowed his eyes. "So you're really a dragon? I mean. Your eyes and ears are a bit of a giveaway, and those are fangs. But no scales, so..."

Jake laughed, picking up the pace. "Dragons - our kind, at least - are shapeshifters. This is my human form. Helps me blend in." He touched his ears. "The less-than-human qualities are actually because I've been using my powers so much in training. They're supposed to fade over time as I get more control over my human form."

Danny nodded. "That's pretty cool," he said. "So you're, what, here for the same reason I am? Making allies, being on the defensive in case of an attack?"

"Yes and no," Jake replied. "Dude, I've dealt with enough wizards to know I won't really be making many allies. I'm a protector, yeah, but unless I'm getting paid, I'm staying far away from the little brats."

Danny looked worried. "Oh," he said in a quieter voice. "Okay. I hope they're not too bad."

Jake let out a burst of laughter, slapping the kid on the back (he was cold, wow). "Don't worry, yo! That's my personal opinion. You're likeable. I'm sure it'll be fine."

A small grin made its way after that statement. "You really don't like wizards, do you?" They began to climb up a flight of stairs.

Jake shook his head. "Sorry, but no. There was an exchange student who turned out to be a wizard - self absorbed prick, a little more chill now, but still. Then there's Eli Pandarus, a dark wizard who keeps popping up every few weeks and ruining my day. Not to mention the warlock kids at the edge of town who like to use me as a piñata. Or the time I stumbled across a witch who hexed me with zits for like, two weeks. And I had to go to school. God, I hate her. All the other magical creatures around New York do, too."

"Jeez. Amity Park must be really off the radar if I haven't even heard of all this."

"Well, the magical community is kept secret - wait, wait, wait," Jake stopped for a moment to stare at Danny. "Did you say Amity Park?"

"Yeah?" Danny kept on walking. He looked at the dragon nervously. "What about it?"

"As in, 'America's Most Haunted City,' Amity Park? Ghosts-running-rampart Amity Park? Amity-no-one-magical-ever-goes-there-because-it's-so-weird-Park?"

"If you're talking about Amity Park, Illinois," Danny said dryly, "then, yes. That Amity Park."

Jake whistled. "Wow. And I thought I had it bad. How many ghosts attack per day?"

"Depends. It can get up to about ten or eleven."

"Wow."
"Yeah." Danny looked at all the paintings hung up on the walls and realized with a jolt they were moving. He shook his head, wondering at what else there was in the castle.

"So," Jake continued, "how do you deal? With all the ghosts 'n shit."

"I fight them."

"You - you fight them. You, a ghost, fight other ghosts."

"I'm half ghost," Danny pointed out. "I still live among humans. My ghost form, Phantom, is a lot more well known."

"Phantom? As in, Danny Phantom?"

His legs were starting to burn from all the stairs. Minerva was still walking about ten feet in front of them, and he hoped she wasn't eavesdropping. "So you have heard of me."

Jake grinned again. "I'm the magical protector of the USA. Well, not until I'm eighteen; until then, I'm only in charge of New York and some of the surrounding states. But I'm supposed to know about all the big figures."

"I'm a big figure?"

Jake barked a laugh. "I'm kidding, dude. I read about you on an article online."

"Oh." Danny pouted. Jake laughed at his expression again.

"It's pretty cool, though," he said. "What you do. No one human sees me doing anything."

Danny shrugged. "Thanks, I guess. I don't know. People don't always like me. I'm a ghost, so."

"That's messed up."

"Yeah."

Silence overtook the both of them for a few moments. Jake focused on his footfalls and how they echoed on the stairs, then noticed how Danny didn't seem to make any noise as he walked. Creepy.

"Ugh," Jake complained, "there are too many stairs."

Danny smirked a little. "Can't you fly?"

"'Course I can. Can't you?"

"Ha! I'm a ghost, I think the least I can do is fly."

Jake stopped, turning his head to look at the pale boy. "Wanna race?"

"We don't even know where we're going. And Minerva wouldn't like it."

"Minerva can shove a broomstick up her ass. I got the short straw, I might as well have fun here."

Danny snickered. "Fine, fine." His blue eyes flashed a toxic green, glowing in the dim light. Jake shivered as the temperature around them dropped a few degrees. "Let's see what you've got, Dragon Breath."

"Oh, it is so on, Casper."
"Going ghost!" Danny cried, and a ring of light materialized around his waist. It split into two and traveled up and down his body, replacing his normal attire with a black jumpsuit. A flaming D rested on his chest. His skin gained an ethereal glow, his freckles more prominent, and his hair became a snowy white. His eyes burned more fiercely.

Jake whistled. "Not bad. And cute logo." He flashed his teeth again, and his fangs were longer; scales brimmed beneath the surface of his skin as he tapped into his chi. "Dragon up!" Jake yelled and let flames consume him, grinning as Danny shouted in surprise and leaped back.

His jaw elongated and his fingers grew claws; a tail and wings came into existence as the fire continued to burn, making him feel warm but comforted at the same time as his body morphed into his true form. Before long, a tall, crimson red dragon sat coiled on the stairs, copper eyes alight with energy.

Jake took a moment to enjoy the stunned look on Danny's face before spreading his wings and flying up the stairs, shouting, "Ready-set-go!" over his shoulder.

"Hey!" he heard behind him. "No fair!"

Jake laughed as he surpassed Minerva, who was staring at him with a furious expression on her face. He maneuvered up the stairs, but his wingspan was a little large and so he had to rely partly on pushing off things with his claws - it was fortunate his form was rather slender. He heard some paintings shouting in indignation as he flew by.

A cold hand tapped his shoulder. Jake looked to see Danny Phantom flying beside him, and easy smirk on his face. The ghost boy laughed openly and shot forward, taking advantage of Jake's limited space to overtake him. The dragon huffed in frustration and reached for the spectral tail in front of him, but his claws went right through.

"Intangibility!" Jake exclaimed. "Awesome!"

Danny going intangible was handy for a number of things, one of which being that he didn't have to worry about the stairs moving and hitting him in the face.

In his moment of distraction, Jake wasn't able to get out of the way fast enough as a stone staircase came his way. He fell with a yelp, crashing into another staircase below him. Groaning at the impact (That'll leave a mark for a while), he allowed himself to revert back to human form. Now it just hurt everywhere and not just his back. Joy.

Hearing laughter from above him, Jake turned his head to glare at Danny, who was doing involuntary flips in the air as he cackled.

"Oh, my G-" He clutched his stomach. "That was - you just-" A hand went up to wipe a tear. "It hit you in the face."

Jake moaned dramatically. "Yeah, and it hurt. Now, are you gonna help me up, or..."

"Yeah, yeah. Just... just give me this moment."

"I hate you."

"We've only just met."

"I know. I've decided I hate you." There was no weight in his words; Jake knew he'd made a friend.
"Does this mean I've won? That I've defeated the Great Dragon?"

"Whatever, Fenton." A beat. "I don't wanna move."

Chuckles from up ahead. "Here, I'll help you." A pair of cold arms encircled his waist and pulled him up. Jake winced at the pain lancing throughout his ribs and back, closing his eyes as Danny flew him to the top of the stairs, where Minerva waited with crossed arms.

"You'll be okay though, right? You didn't break anything?" He sounded worried.

"Mm. Get me a soda and I'll be fine." He bit his tongue to stop himself from screaming as Danny put him on the ground. "...Although, a healing spell would be nice."

Minerva huffed impatiently. "I'll bring you to the hospital wing. What were you two thinking? Do you want to get killed on the first day here?"

Danny landed, and the white rings appeared again to turn him back to Fenton. The air around them grew considerably warmer. "Sorry, Minerva," he said sheepishly.

The witch shook her head in disbelief, closing her eyes briefly as if to ask some higher power what she had done to deserve this. "I'll show you to your room," she said in a monotone voice, opening her eyes again. "You'll be sleeping in the Room of Requirement, but it'll have to wait actually going in until we can fix up Jake."

"I second that," Jake piped up weakly.

"Alright." Danny clapped his hands together. "Hospital wing. Where to?"

They used a spell to levitate Jake and bring him to the hospital wing without jostling him too much, for which he was grateful. Madam Pomfrey was in near hysterics when she learned that they'd nearly killed the American Dragon not two hours after he'd arrived; luckily, the damage wasn't too severe. A few bruised ribs, and he'd nearly broken his back, but nothing several painstaking minutes of having magic done on him couldn't handle.

They had their luggage (left at the bottom of the stairs, whoops) brought up to the where the Room of Requirement would be by a group of house elves. Jake had this really guilty look on his face when he was told who brought them up, but said nothing. Danny decided then that he'd try to learn as much as he could about the magical realm.

"The Room of Requirement functions exactly as its name says," Minerva explained to them in front of a large tapestry. "To enter, you must walk by it three times while thinking of what you may need. For this purpose, I would recommend a sleeping quarters. A common room, perhaps."

Danny peered at the tapestry. It showcased a man in fancy robes at the forefront with giant plant-like structures behind him. He held his hand above his head as if bracing himself for something. "So where does it appear? We just think about it?"

Minerva nodded. Her face loosened a bit from its rather stressed expression. "I must go talk with Albus, now. He'll want to know you've made it... in one piece. If you have any trouble with opening the door, ask one of the paintings to send for a staff member." And with that, she was walking down the hall again, not so much as a goodbye.
"A painting," Danny deadpanned, but when he looked at Jake, he saw that the boy had already moved past that statement as if it were the most normal thing in the world. "Fine, whatever," the ghost muttered to himself. "Talking paintings. That makes sense. Of course."

The two boys walked up and down the hall three times as instructed. Danny didn't know how hard he was supposed to think, so he settled with repeating, Room to stay in. Room to stay in. Like a hotel room or something. Or, I dunno, a common room? Like Minerva said? Whatever that would look like? Just something to sleep in, please. Thanks.

"Danny," Jake called, amusement raising his pitch. "Yo. You can stop staring at the ground like you're constipated."

Danny flushed, raising his head to look at the shorter kid. He stood in front of a door that had definitely not been there before, a self-satisfied grin on his face.

"What are you smirking about?" Danny said as he walked by him and opened the door. "You're the one who ran into a staircase."

"Rude," Jake muttered, then stopped to stare into the room. "Woah. Okay. This is actually pretty sweet." He walked in, closely followed by Danny. The door swung shut behind them.

The room was maybe five times larger than Danny's at home, walls painted a blue-grey. It held two twin beds pushed against the right side of the wall with a curtain separating it for privacy. Each side of the curtain was a dull shade of purple and held the logos of both representatives: the DP on Danny's jumpsuit, and a coiled red dragon with a snarling maw. Upon closer inspection, Danny could see that their luggage had been dropped off by the foot of the bed.

The left side of the room was occupied by a large fireplace ringed with dark red bricks. Wood lay inside, unlit. A few couches sat around it, a soft rug the same color as the curtains underneath.

The far side held what appeared to be shelves full of books; Danny could make out some titles, some of which he recognized, but most of which must've belonged solely to the magical community (Hair Hygiene for Pixies was one of them). He looked to the right and found a small fridge pushed up against a wall.

"Jake!" Danny called, making his way over. "Check it out!"

Jake bounded over. "Aw, sweet, a minifridge!" he exclaimed, bending down to open it. He shouted in triumph and turned around to hold up two cans of soda. "Bingo!" he said gleefully.

Danny laughed and took the can from his hands, popping it open and taking a swig. It fizzled pleasantly on his tongue, but was a little too sweet for his taste. "I prefer coffee," he said.

"No problem," Jake replied. "I think I saw a cabinet full of coffee and tea over by the kitchen."

Danny blinked. "The kitchen?"

"Well, it's not exactly a kitchen. It's just a bunch of cabinets. I think there were some pop tarts, too." A wry grin crawled up his face. "I guess they really don't expect us to be at breakfast on time every day."

Danny snorted, taking his soda with him as he continued to explore.

The room had an extra training area, as the boys soon discovered. A doorway lead to a circular room where a few punching backs lay on the side, a mat in the middle of the room for sparring.
Some wooden sticks - Fencing? Swordfighting? - were leaning against the wall, and weights were settled on a rack. Some metal beams for pull ups were strung up on the wall, and there was even a small treadmill.

Danny stared. "This isn't a hotel room," he finally managed.

Jake gave him a confused look. "I asked for a place to stay that would cater to our needs. What, you asked for a hotel room?"

Danny rubbed the back of his neck. "I wasn't that specific," he finally managed, glancing sideways at the dragon.

His new friend grinned at him. "C'mon, Casper. I wanna get some training in before goin' to bed, and now that I'm healed I feel like, super energized. What d'you say to a little sparring match?"

"A dragon and a ghost sparring in a hidden room in a magical castle," Danny mused. "This is gonna be a weird year." He grinned. "You're on."

Minerva McGongall sat in her office, thinking over the conversation she'd had with Dumbledore. He'd wanted to know how the two representatives were settling in, to which she pointed out that they'd only been there a couple hours. Of course, she'd asked him just what he was planning to do with a couple of teenagers and not the capable adults he'd sent for, but Albus had merely responded with a mischievous smile and the short answer of, "They'll be able to get the full Hogwarts experience this way, Minerva."

The professor sighed. She knew Albus planned on sending Danny and Jake to the Order's headquarters; it was the best way to ensure they knew the dangers lurking in this new era of darkness. She only wished they'd been permitted to know about it. The Order kept its secrets very well - perhaps too well. They wouldn't be happy knowing they wouldn't actually be able to spend much time in their new room until the school year started.

Her mouth twitched at the thought of Jake Long seeing the dark, gloomy interior of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place.

For now, however, she had a job to do: get the two children situated, show them around the school, then bring them to the Order so they could gain more information, and hopefully meet Harry in the process. She wondered when Albus planned on bringing him out of that horrible muggle home.

For now, though, she would deal with the Americans.

Minerva tapped her fingers on the cool surface of her desk. She hoped the headmaster's plan would work.

There had been enough suffering for her students.
The morning after was spent in lazy awakenings, moaning about how early it was, and getting pushed off the bed by a certain dragon.

“How are you not tired?” Danny groaned, throwing a pillow at the other boy.

Jake shrugged. His hair was tousled, sticking upwards and sideways and not at all in the careful style it was done in yesterday. He wore a white pajama shirt and red boxers. “I’m exhausted, actually. Gramps usually makes me get up early, but jet lag is a bitch.” A tired grin. “Besides, I’m pretty sure we’re late to breakfast. Might as well show up sometime. I’m already on Minerva’s bad side.”

Danny groaned again. He disentangled himself from the sheets and rolled off the bed, lying on the floor for a second before getting up and grabbing a hoodie from his open luggage. It was maybe three sizes too large, hanging off his body like a giant blue parka. His shorts were completely hidden, as the hoodie nearly came up to his knees.

Danny trudged across the room and to the “cabinet area,” as Jake had dubbed it. The little counter sticking out of the wall was cool to the touch, and he leaned into it in the hopes of waking himself
up a bit. He started opening and closing random cupboards, looking for anything worth eating. To his right, he heard Jake rummaging around as well.

He ended up opening the cabinet that was supposed to house the ground coffee beans, only to gaze in horror at the package as he read the label. “Oh, I’m in hell.”

Jake snorted. “Figured that already.”

“No, no, I mean...” Danny made a whine of distress, shoving the pack in Jake’s face. “Look. It’s decaf.”

He raised an eyebrow. “So?”

“So?” Danny blinked at him. Did this kid not drink coffee? “So there’s no caffeine in it. No rejuvenation. No salvation. No healing. Jake, I can’t survive on decaf.”

Jake pushed the pack away from him, using his other hand to wave dismissively. “Get a soda. That has caffeine.”

“It’s not the same!”

“Wow. Okay. You’re whiny in the morning.”

Danny glared at him. Jake grinned back, poking him on the shoulder. “Chill,” he said to the ghost. “I’ll ask the wizards for some. They’re bound to at least have caffeine at their disposal.”

Danny huffed, staring accusingly at the bag of false coffee as if it were the root of all that was evil in the world. “I thought this room catered to our needs.”

“You asked for a hotel room.”

“A hotel room still has coffee!”

Jake started laughing then, clutching his stomach as he wheezed and cackled, walking away from the stunned boy still complaining about not being able to properly energize.

Danny didn’t bother getting dressed; the hoodie was warm, and it smelled good; and to be honest, he just didn’t really want to rummage through his things right now. Jake was a different story; he spent maybe a full fifteen minutes on his hair, gelling it to get the usual spiky style Danny had first seen him in. He went to throw on some sweatpants and a clean shirt, wearing a dull red sweater on top with the words, “I survived Death Valley” printed in an ominous black font.

“Road trip,” Jake told Danny after noticing his questioning stare.

The boys each grabbed a pop tart on their way out - it tasted like cardboard, Danny didn’t know how people could enjoy it - and watched as the door to the room disappeared when they exited. Jake assured Danny that their belongings were not lost; they needed only ask for the same room when they returned.

Chatting amiably with each other as they attempted to navigate the labyrinth of a school, Danny allowed himself to relax for the first time he’d arrived. The beds were comfortable, but it felt so foreign, so unlike home, and it left him wondering just how Amity Park was faring without him. His phone still worked, thank Clockwork - there had been a mention of technology not working in the school as it was so drenched in magic. Danny hypothesized that because his phone had been exposed to ectoplasm for so long, it would counteract any effects.
Jake's phone, on the other hand, didn't work as well. It was able to function properly, but ran out of batteries too soon and didn't have very good service. "I'm around a lot of magic, so the phone was designed to have some resistance to it," he explained. "But there's so much here that even my phone can't work around it."

They weren't in much of a hurry to get down; there was no set time for them to arrive, but seeing as how this was a school, breakfast was probably served early. The time was around ten a.m., so there'd be hell to pay when Minerva found them.

For now, though, they were content with exploring.

Hogwarts castle was lit by candles and lanterns, walls full of moving paintings (rather rude to the newcomers, too), and so medieval looking that Danny had a hard time imagining many students coming here. They ran into a few ghosts (wizard ghosts; intangible and harmless, Jake assured him) who greeted them warmly, some even going so far as to bow.

"We're honored to have you here, Masters," a rather heavyset ghost rumbled, bowing so low Danny was worried he'd topple over. "Please, if you have any concerns, just ask."

"Yo, thanks, uh..." Jake trailed off.

The ghost rose, beaming. "The Fat Friar, Lord," he said excitedly. "And, I must say, I've never met a Draco before, so I'm especially excited to learn about you and your kind."

"That's great," Jake interrupted. "Really. And I'm sure we'll have plenty of time to catch up soon..."

"We've gotta get to the cafeteria soon," Danny took over.

"Do you mean the Great Hall? Or the kitchens?"

"Uh... wherever you eat, I guess."

The Fat Friar nodded. "Yes, that would be the Great Hall. And, Sir Phantom, it's an honor to meet you as well! I've heard tale of many of your quests."

Danny blinked, a bit surprised at the title. Dora had knighted him a while back, but he didn't know other ghosts knew about it as well. "Thanks? Please, you can call me Danny. I'm not really known as 'Sir Phantom' outside of Dora's kingdom."

The ghost bobbed his head again, practically radiating excitement. "Yes, yes, very well. Danny. I can show you to the Great Hall, if you'd like."

"Do we really need to go now?" Jake complained under his breath. Danny kicked him in the shin.

The ghost showed them about six floors down ("Stairs," Jake declared. "I've decided I hate them.") to the hallway from which they had first entered the night before. With a couple more bows and farewells, the Fat Friar finally left them alone in front of the large double doors.

Once the spirit had rounded the corner, Jake turned to Danny with a self-satisfied grin on his face. "Lord, huh?" he mused. "Man, I could get used to that."

Danny raised an eyebrow. "Careful, Long. They don't know how much of an ass you are yet."

Jake made a show of looking around for listeners before putting a finger to his lips. "Shh," he whispered theatrically. "Don't blow my cover."
Danny entered the Great Hall first, pushing the heavy doors open and holding them for Jake, who was muttering on about "crazy ass wizards and their stupid ass moving staircases."

The two stopped a few feet into the room, each letting out a *woah* as they took everything in.

The room was enormous; Danny imagined he could fit all of Casper High inside it. Four long tables were placed along the length of the room, another smaller table at the far side - a golden throne-like chair sat in the middle, and Danny wondered who was important enough to sit there.

"Danny," Jake said in a hushed voice. "Look up."

Danny did as he was told, and froze.

For one, there were the candles. Thousands of them floated several feet above the tables, lighting the room in a warm glow and making the temperature a little toasty, but not uncomfortably so. Distantly, he wondered if wax ever dripped down.

The ceiling was a different matter entirely. It reflected the sky, which was sunny and full of endless blue, a few clouds dotting the atmosphere. He felt like he was falling into it; rather ironic, considering it was the sky.

"Fuckin' enchantments," Jake muttered. "Okay, this is pretty cool. The Am-Drag approves."

Danny let out a breathy laugh, unable to look away. the sun, still in the process of making its way to its highest point, was beginning to hurt his eyes. He forced himself to look back at the tables, wondering just how many students it allowed.

"Wicked-lookin' chair up at front," Jake said. "You think we'd get to sit in there?" A toothy grin. "I mean. *We are 'Masters.'"

Danny tried to imagine a tiny Jake sitting in the chair, head barely peeking over the top of the table, and had to reign in his laughter.

"The chair is for the headmaster of Hogwarts," a voice behind them snapped. "And you're *far* from being Masters."

They whirled around simultaneously to see Minerva McGonagall standing in the doorway, a curt frown on her face. Her hair was pulled back in much the same way it was yesterday; she wore emerald green robes, her hands folded in front of her. Danny noticed how she seemed to have slight bags underneath her eyes, as if she hadn't slept well last night.

Jake placed a hand over his heart. "*Jesus, woman,* ya nearly gave me a heart attack!"

"Oh, don't be dramatic," Minerva scoffed. She closed her eyes for a moment, and when she spoke again, her tone was considerably softer. "If you've had breakfast already, Albus wants to meet you in his office soon."

Danny and Jake shared a look. They had the pop tarts, but to be honest, that wasn't exactly a *filling* breakfast. Plus, Danny was still missing his caffeine.

"We'll have breakfast first," Danny said. "And, uh, is there coffee here?"

"There was only decaf in the room and he won't stop complaining about it," Jake chimed it. Danny glared at him.
Minerva nodded. "Very well. I'll send for Argus to come get you when you're ready. As for the coffee, the house elves should prepare some for you."

Danny thanked her, and before long they were seated at one of the tables. Jake had wanted to sit at the throne, but one withering look from the witch convinced him otherwise. They sat at the table on the left side of the room, closest to the window. Goblets, plates, and silverware lay on the surface of the table, appearing sometime after they had sat down.

Jake had the same pained look on his face as last night when the house elves were mentioned. He became unnaturally quiet, tapping on the surface of the table next to Danny as they waited for their food. The air was thick with tension, the dragon's eyes seeming to burn holes into the table.

"Jake-"

"Wizards," he spat before Danny could ask. "I can't believe they're still using house elves." He clenched his fists and raised his head to look at Danny, eyes alight with red fire. "Did you know they don't even get paid? The house elves say they enjoy it, sure, but it's still so wrong. They deserve to at least get paid, not be treated as slaves by people who barely even know they exist."

Danny stayed silent.

Jake was practically shaking with fury. "Gee told me about them. It's totally whack, and they're barely recognized for their work, and..." He took a deep, shuddering breath. "I hate it. I hate it. I hate that they don't get treated in the best possible way. They deserve to be treated with respect, and instead they're usually stuck with magical families who abuse them because they know the poor things can't actually leave. Because they're bound to them." His voice was thick with venom, and when he growled, it sounded animalistic and vicious. "Can you imagine, Fenton? Being kept as a slave and having to enjoy it because you've never actually known freedom? Considering being free a dishonor because your entire family has always known nothing but servitude?"

"No," Danny said softly. He couldn't imagine not having the freedom Phantom provided, being able to escape his parents if needed be, always having a home in the Ghost Zone if it became too dangerous. He always had a plan to fall back on, and his friends would always be there for him.

Jake's shoulders slumped. "I hate wizards," he said in a tired voice. "I hate them for doing this."

They sat in silence for a few minutes longer until the food appeared on the table in a wide assortment of sweets, fruit, bacon, sausage, and eggs; Danny's goblet indeed filled up with coffee, and Jake's included some strong-smelling tea.

After Jake's rant, Danny felt a little bad about the thought of eating - then his stomach growled, and the other had boy had looked at him with an amused expression, saying, "It's okay, yo. Better appreciate the food they made. It'd be more rude not to eat it."

Despite his words, Jake didn't eat as much as Danny, who'd piled his plate high with bacon and pastries. The coffee was bitter and woke him up instantly, just the right temperature without burning his tongue. Meanwhile, Jake enjoyed his tea ("Green tea is okay," he said. "Gramps makes me drink it every morning to help my fire breathing glands. Used to be chamomile, but that's too sweet for me.")., then nibbled on some sausage and a pancake.

The Great Hall, though beautiful, was almost too silent when there were only to people in it. Danny tried to imagine hundreds of students seated at the tables, divided up into cliques, chatting about magic and potions and whatever else it was wizards talked about. He wondered if the house elves
would serve the food themselves, but with the way Jake talked about them, it seemed like they were never seen around the school.

A heavy sigh. Jake let his fork fall with a clatter, then turned to Danny. "I'm **bored,**" he huffed. "Let's play a game."

"A game?"

"Yeah. Like... twenty questions!"

"Twenty questions," Danny deadpanned.

Jake shrugged, then took another sip of his tea. "Dude, we're gonna be livin' together for a year. I'd like to know a bit more about you."

Danny thought for a moment, drumming his fingers on his goblet. "Alright," he relented. "You go first."

Jake shot him a quick grin. "Any siblings?"

"One. An older sister." He laughed. "She likes to psychoanalyze me. Wants to become a psychologist, and I'm her favorite patient."

"She knows about you being half ghost?"

"It's not your turn," Danny pointed out. "But, yeah. She's been a huge help, covering for me. My parents don't know. What about you? Do your parents know?"

Jake nodded. "My mom's a dragon, so that's kind of a given. The powers skipped her generation, though, so she's stuck in her human form. My dad's human, and he found out a few weeks ago. I got a little sister, Haley - kind of a know-it-all, likes to rub it in my face that she matured faster." He rolled his eyes.

Danny laughed. He knew what it was like to have overbearing siblings.

"What's your favorite color?"

Danny groaned. "That's such a boring question," he complained. "It's blue, though."

Jake snorted. "Really? Wouldn't have guessed," he said slyly, eyeing Danny's sweater. The halfa poked his shoulder.

"Whatever, Long." He thought for a moment. "Uh. Okay. Play any instruments?"

"I used to play violin," Jake said. "But, uh, dragon duties got in the way. I still know a little. Haley can play it way better." He tapped his chin. "Though I've always liked the drums. Bet I'd be great at it."

"Cocky, aren't we?"

"You want a piece of this, Casper? Bet ya I could smack your ass all the way back into the afterlife."

The twenty questions were up within minutes, many of them being little things about hobbies, interests, and generally nothing too personal. It turned out that Jake's favorite color was red, he was a Pisces, and he liked to skateboard. He could draw with his feet but not as well with his hands, and
his favorite dragon power was his fire breathing. He loved Halloween because it allowed him to roam freely as a dragon and pass it off as a costume.

Danny talked about Sam and Tucker, the ghost friends he'd made, and how good the Nasty Burgers were. Jake had acted surprised when he'd mentioned learning the ukulele for Sam's birthday song a few years back ("She wanted to see how goth I could make it," he explained. "Honestly? I think I did a pretty good job.")), but, like the dragon, he barely had time for the instrument anyway. Danny liked to doodle the different ghosts he'd seen, but it never really went further than a simple sketch.

"NASA, huh?" Jake mused after he'd mentioned his dream of being an astronaut. "Dude, I'm gonna be honest - if you're serious about doing that, then you shouldn't give up just because of ghost hunting. Your grades can be brought up and you'll only get better at balancing your double life as time goes on. And, yo, don't forget to take a break every once in a while."

Danny beamed at him. Jake was probably the first person to say he had a chance at working at NASA, and coming from the secret dragon, it gave him a little more hope for the future.

Their talking had become more personal after that, leaving Jake venting about Rotwood and Danny confessing his fears of putting too much pressure on his friends. It was strange, confiding in someone they'd only known for about a day, but the things they had in common - having to hide a part of themselves, putting up with those who hated them, and getting dragged by their throats to fulfill a destiny neither had ever wanted in the first place - connected them in a way which made Danny feel like he could trust Jake, that he'd understand what he was going through.

"Your parents," Jake started suddenly. Danny had been sipping at his coffee as he listened to Jake talk about the Dragon Council and the different laws pertaining to his race. "They're ghost hunters, right? The Fentons. I think I've heard of them online somewhere."

"Yeah," Danny said tentatively. As approachable as Jake was, he wasn't entirely hung up on the idea of discussing his home life.

Jake stared at him curiously, barely moving. Then he smiled and raised his goblet. "You're gonna do great things, man. Don't let the haters get you down."

For the first time in a while, Danny felt at home.

Ten minutes later and breakfast was cleared, the goblets empty and plates shining as if they'd just been washed. Jake had immediately stood from the table and made his way back across the Great Hall without a second glance, though not without shooting a quick thought of thanks to the house elves he knew were probably in the kitchen. Maybe he could figure out where said kitchen was so he could thank them in person...

"Next time, we eat in the room," Jake threw over his shoulder. "They've got pop tarts, I'm sure there're other stuff there, too."

Danny caught up with him, falling in step beside the dragon as they exited the Great Hall. "Are you sure? We'll be eating with the students."

"Yo, I ain't getting up at seven every morning," Jake snorted. Danny laughed beside him.

They leaned against the wall outside, occasionally chatting about a music group or what they planned to do over the course of the year. Jake was not ashamed to admit that most of the options included pranks.
Danny himself wasn't as talkative as Jake, but his mood seemed to swing violently from joy to sadness to total apathy, making him hard to read. He had a lot of pressure on him, that was for sure; what with ghost hunting parents, high school, and being half dead, Jake didn't blame him. It was kind of refreshing to find someone who could understand the pressures of keeping a double life.

The kid was so cynical, though, more cynical than Jake; he didn't have high hopes for his own future and believed he wouldn't ever make it very far in life (afterlife, whatever). He had such a low opinion of himself, it made Jake want to hug the crap out of him.

A gaunt, sickly-looking man with greasy gray hair and a cat trailing behind him came to pick them up; he introduced himself as Argus Filch in a gruff and monotonous voice, then motioned for them to follow him to the headmaster's office.

They walked for what seemed like hours, up several flights of stairs and stopping in front of a large gargoyle, reminiscent of a griffin, towering several feet over the troop. "Lemon drops," Filch told the statue. His cat meowed in affirmation.

The gargoyle rumbled, rising to show stairs ascending into the tower above. Filch ushered Danny and Jake onto the stone, then was off into the corridor, muttering to himself.

Danny looked up as they rose. "It's like a wizard elevator," he told Jake.

They eventually reached the top. Another door awaited them, and Jake hesitated only for a moment before beginning to bang on the door.

"Jake! What are you-"

"It's music, baby," Jake yelled, drumming a beat onto the wooden surface. He grinned. "C'mon, Bumblebee deserves it."

"Bumble... what?"

The door flew open.

Minerva stood there, an extremely irritated expression on her face, eyes travelling down to look at Danny and Jake. Her mouth twisted in an exasperated expression.

Jake grinned at her. "Hey," he said cheerfully.

She sighed, opening the door fully to allow them to enter.

The first thing Jake noticed was how... odd everything was. The room was circular, and paintings of past headmasters hung on the walls. Shelves housed strange instruments, jars full of things that probably belonged on the black market, little trinkets whistling and flitting around the room. A large, silver bowl was pushed up against the wall; an old hat collected dust atop a high shelf; stranger still, Jake could see a large, red bird perched next to the desk in the center of the room. A phoenix?

The man sitting at the desk was clearly stifling laughter; blue eyes crinkled behind a pair of half moon spectacles, mouth twitching underneath a long, white beard. He wore blue robes imprinted with little yellow stars, and a light blue wizard's hat sat atop his head.

Danny stared at him. "Gandalf?"

"Bumblebee," Jake said.
Minerva looked like she wanted to strangle him, her fingers twitching at her sides.

The old man laughed. "My name is Albus Dumbledore," he said in a voice dripping with mirth. "But both of those mistakes have been made."

Danny's cheeks were colored green. Jake bit his lip to keep from snorting. This guy, he could get used to.

"Jake and Danny, I presume?" Albus continued. When both of them nodded, he smiled. "Excellent! Please, sit. We have much to discuss."

The chairs were comfortable, not at all like the hard torture devices at school, and Jake immediately let himself slouch into it, gaining a twinge of satisfaction as Minerva's mouth pursed further.

Albus steepled his fingers, leaning forward in the desk. "Minerva, I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to wait outside."

Minerva bowed her head, turned, and briskly left the office.

The old wizard stared at each of them, eyes seeming to see right through them. Jake held his gaze, defiantly raising his chin. Albus smiled at bit at the motion.

"You're both aware of what your task here is, no?" he asked.

"I'm, uh, supposed to make allies," Danny said. "And protect the students if anything goes wrong, right?"

"Precisely," Albus answered with a satisfied nod. "The Ghost Zone especially houses many powerful entities, and it would be unwise not to have a backup plan in case Hogwarts becomes entirely unsafe. I understand Clockwork was not able to come himself, and I appreciate him sending over his apprentice."

Danny muttered something about not having any lessons, then nodded. "I'll try my best," he said resolutely.

"I would appreciate it if you became more acquainted with the ghosts as well," Albus added. "They don't interact much with the students, and I was hoping you could rekindle that relationship by talking about ghosts around those who may be interested?" Danny nodded, and Albus beamed. "Brilliant!" he exclaimed. Turning to Jake, he said, "You're more our offense, as I've gathered. You're not the only dragon that has been sent to a school?"

"Nah," Jake said. "A few others have been sent all over the world. Sorry y'all didn't get the 'Dragon Master' you'd sent for, by the way."

"Nonsense." Albus waved his hand in the air. "As long as you're well-versed in how to fight properly, I won't complain about your status. What I do want to talk about-" he leaned even further across the desk, narrowing his eyes, "-is how well you'd fare around so many wizards."

"I, ah." Jake gulped, slouching down even further. Danny snickered. "Shut it, Casper. Uh, listen, yo - I've got my own beef with wizards." he wrung his hands together. "I'm not exactly the best diplomat you could've gotten, but, no offense... this school ain't exactly-" He made a frustrated sound in the back of his throat. "We drew straws," he said finally, feeling stupid.

Albus' expression softened. "Hogwarts isn't the ideal place for you to be, I understand," he began.
"But, Jake, you have to understand that you'll need to make allies. Not many of the students know of the Dragons of Draco Isle, so you need to show you're not a threat." Finally, he leaned back a bit.

"The wizarding world still isn't completely convinced of Voldemort's return, but after the events of the Triwizard Tournament, many believe something terrible has happened. The other schools are not naive. I may have had a hand, but in the end... it was their decision to have help in keeping the school safe.

"You're in charge of observing the students, making friends, and being the primary watch for the unusual. Danny's responsibility is bridging the gap between students and ghosts, and - Ancients forbid - watching out for less obvious signs of danger."

"Like spies?" Danny suggested.

Albus scowled. "Yes. I do hope it won't come to that, but... yes."

Jake sighed. "Fine, I'll try to be diplomatic - I'm all over it. But I've got my eye on y'all."

His scowl quickly returned back to its former smile. "Thank you. I would expect nothing less."

Albus flattened his palms on the table. "The reason we have both you and Danny, while the other schools have only one dragon protector, is mostly because I'm afraid Hogwarts is no longer the safe haven it used to be. Closing the school would be a last resort, and I must do everything in my power to keep them safe."

If there's a literal war going on, Jake thought, shouldn't the best course of action be closing the school? Seriously, how jacked up are these guys?

"Your schedules will be mostly free for you to move around the school as you wish," he continued. "However, I ask that you observe at least three classes each day, excluding the weekends. You may observe them together or apart, as long as you do not disrupt the class." His eyes twinkled again, and Jake realized how much he reminded him of Sun. And Gramps. If they had a child, then - oh, okay, fuck no-

"Other than that," Albus said, interrupting his less-than-savory thoughts, "I'm assuming you both go to muggle schools?"

The two nodded, equal expressions of displeasure upon their faces. "I'll be entering high school," Jake said.

"Then I'd dare say you have Danny here at an advantage," Albus replied. "He will be able to help you with some material, as he is a year older."

The slightly panicked look on Danny's face did not soothe Jake in the slightest.

"I will arrange for your studying material to be sent to you so you may work on it during the year," Albus continued. "I'd hate for you to fall behind and be stressed after arriving back at home next summer." His lips stretched into a cheery smile, blue eyes twinkling. "I believe those are all the technicalities out of the way. Please enjoy your stay; we won't be starting the school year for another two weeks or so, but I do want to give you enough time to get acquainted. You'll have noticed we had no set time for you to eat breakfast."

At that comment, both boys flushed and spluttered out unintelligible replies.

Albus chuckled. "That's quite all right. Any questions?"
"Just one," Danny said. "What kind of bird is that?" He pointed towards the phoenix.

"That would be my dear friend, Fawkes," Albus replied happily. The bird squawked a greeting. "He's a phoenix, and maturing quite nicely."

"A... okay." Danny stared at the bird. Jake snorted at his expression.

"You should see the griffins in New York," he told the flabbergasted boy.

Albus chuckled. "I assure you, there are many strange things in the magical world. It can be exciting at times, or frightening, but I'm sure you'll find yourself enjoying the many wonders of Hogwarts." He finished that statement with his arms outstretched as if the entire magical world was encompassed inside his office.

The silence stretched on, growing a little awkward as Danny continued to stare at him. Jake coughed.

Albus lowered his arms. "There are some more details we have to work out," he said. "Minerva and I spoke last night, and we've come to the agreement to introduce you into the Order of the Phoenix. It's an organization dedicated to fighting Voldemort, and I believe you'll find your jobs much easier if you have a cause to report back to."

Danny nodded. "That makes sense. Where is the Order?"

"It resides in Islington," Albus replied. At their confused looks, he added, "London." He shifted in his seat, turning his head to the side slightly to look at Fawkes. "We will depart this evening."

"Hold up, yo," Jake interrupted. "This evening? Are you crazy? We just got here, and we're still getting used to the jet lag because the States are really far away, if you haven't noticed, and now you're makin' us go to London for some whack Order?" He huffed, crossing his arms. "No offense, dude, but... no."

"I agree with Jake," Danny chimed in. "We should've just gone to the Order first. We haven't completely adjusted to this school yet, especially me." His icy blue eyes flared. "I didn't even know magic existed until about two months ago."

The headmaster pondered their statements for a moment, stroking his beard in a thoughtful manner that practically screamed wizened old mentor. Danny wasn't far off with his Gandalf comment. After a few moments, Albus let down his hand and moved away from his chair to his door. "I will speak to Minerva about your arrangements," he said, opening the door to reveal the witch still standing outside patiently. "It will only take a moment."

The door swung closed behind him.

Danny stared at the door, then sighed, crossing his arms. "Unbelievable."

Jake rolled his eyes, cupping a hand to his ear. "Ear of the Dragon," he mumbled, and his human ear stretched to grow into its dragon counterpart. Sneaking a glance at Danny, he smirked at his expression and said, "Like it? I've got several neat tricks up my sleeve. Or, in this case-" he laughed a little, "-up my ear."

Danny shook his head. "Your puns are absolutely horrible."

"Yeah, you'd know about that, Invisobill."
Ignoring the halfa's cries of outrage, Jake focused his hearing towards the door. He could make out every individual sound in the room: the instruments playing soft music, the portraits talking amongst themselves, Fawkes' heartbeat, and Danny's... there was a hum there, not exactly a heartbeat, but close to his chest and definitely pulsing. Jake shrugged, choosing to ignore the strange noise, trying to pinpoint the voices outside.

There must've been some sort of ward against dragon hearing because the voices were still muffled, no matter how hard he listened. Minerva's voice raised a little and was able to make out a, "...sure they can be trusted?" before one of the portraits swore particularly loudly, jolting Jake out of his reverie and causing him to slap his hand over his ears at the sudden cacophony of noises. Glaring at the general direction of the portrait, he allowed his ear to shrink back to a normal size and shook his head at Danny's questioning stare.

The silence between the two was not uncomfortable; despite the way Jake had started to relax in his seat as he waited for the older man to return, Danny chose to break the quiet with a load groan. "I can't believe this," he bemoaned, pulling at his still-messy black hair. "We're having a meeting with the principal of the school and I still haven't gotten ready, and-" his eyes blew wide as he tugged at the single sweatshirt he wore, pajama shorts not even visible underneath. "Oh, Ancients, I just - I look - damn, I definitely don't look like a 'representative' or whatever-"

Jake started to laugh, loud guffaws escaping his mouth as he listened to the stressed teenager. "Chill," he managed to gasp. "Fenton. Fenton, it's - oh, haha, I can't - at least you're not wearing robes. And, like, - pfft - you've totally got the 'space art hoe' aesthetic goin' on." Another bout of laughter.

"Space art hoe? I take offense to that, Long-" 

At that point, the door to the office opened yet again and both professors stepped through. Albus Dumbledore smiled at the two boys in their chairs, mouth twitching as he looked at the still-laughing Jake and how Danny quickly crossed his arms over his chest in an attempt to hide the sweater. Even Minerva looked placated for once.

"Congratulations," Albus said cheerfully. "You get the castle mostly to yourselves for another week before we depart to London. Minerva has graciously allowed you full access to anywhere in the building except for offices and House common rooms so that you may familiarize yourself with what you'll be protecting over the year." He turned to the witch beside him. "Anything to add, professor?"

Minerva McGonagall fixed Jake and Danny, whose faces had shifted to equal amounts of excitement, with a heavy stare. "Do try not to break anything," she said finally. "I'd like Hogwarts - and yourselves - in one piece before the school year starts."

The week passed by in a blur. Between the corridors, classrooms, secret passages, grounds, lake, and forest, Danny and Jake soaked up as much of Hogwarts as they could to get ready for when the students arrived. They spent a lot of their time exploring the gigantic castle, learning to navigate the many stairwells and hallways that seemed to interconnect in a labyrinth almost impossible to memorize.

The outside harbored a lot of fun for the two representatives; they roamed around the terrain and ventured into the forest, admiring the mountainous land around them. The Black Lake was cold, colder than they were accustomed to, but they set aside the temperature to enjoy a few hours in the water, shouting in glee and splashing one another with the water.
That is, until Filch had come running up to the shore yelling about some giant squid. They didn't stay long after that.

Despite how many lessons Jake had been given on the magical underworld, even he hadn't recognized many of the odd plants residing in the greenhouses for Herbology. Danny was acutely reminded of Sam's brief reign with Undergrowth as he stared at the multicolored - and probably dangerous - foliage.

They learned of the creatures inside the Forbidden Forest from the ghosts. A herd of centaurs, thestrals, rumors of gigantic spiders crawling beneath the ground...

Jake had heard of clans outside of the Council's jurisdiction; creatures that rejected the help from their protectors and struck out on their own, creating strict laws reliant on loyalty towards one another that ensured their survival without the scaled beasts. He wasn't entirely sure if it was wise to visit them if they were so intent on being left alone, but he supposed he'd cross that bridge when it came to it.

Danny found a way to get "real coffee" into the Room of Requirement and was in a much better mood because of it - if you could call it better. He was always either humming a tune or talking about space, and it grated on Jake's nerves like nothing else.

Despite all this, the two grew considerably closer over the week they spent at the castle. The vast expanse of land to roam led to many games, one of the more popular being a competition to see who could find the most hidden passages. Danny had a record of over seventeen small ones found, which Jake found highly unfair seeing as he could literally walk through walls.

They made fun of the paintings and pointed out as many flaws in the wizard's architecture as they could; they tried to locate most of the classroom's they'd be observing in but stopped once Jake found the Divination classroom and wasn't able to get the smell out of his nose the rest of the day.

Jake took some of the time to teach Danny about magical creatures, knowing the poor kid hadn't grown around anything wilder than muggle ghosts. He complained about his training but spared him the details of medication, and talked about what exactly his job as the American Dragon entailed ("So you're basically a magic cop," Danny said). The halfa was an avid listener, nodding along to Jake's explanations with wide, starry eyes.

As they walked back to the Room of Requirement on the last night of their stay, Danny told stories about the Ghost Zone and the inhabitants he'd met inside. "There's this huge land of ice called the Far Frozen," he said excitedly. "The ghosts there look like yetis - one of them, Frostbite, helped me with my ice powers and had healed me more times than I can count-"

"You have ice powers?" Jake interjected.

Danny nodded, holding his hand open. His eyes flashed a brighter, electric blue and the temperature around them dropped several degrees. The veins on his wrist glowed bright with ice as a crystal began to form in his palm. Jake watched, mesmerized, as the crystal formed into a sphere and dropped into Danny's hand.

"It won't melt," he said, handing the sphere to Jake, "since it's made with ectoplasmic energy. The crystal was cold to the touch, sending shivers up Jake's spine. "So it's ice?"

Danny grinned at him. "Cool, huh? I've got an ice core."

"How do you get a core? Like... what determines it?" Jake mused as he turned the sphere over in
his palm.

Danny furrowed his brows, stopping in front of the tapestry that was near the door to their room. "I don't know? 'Cause, like, I sorta died of electrocution, so it can't be that..."

"I dunno, dude. You smell like ozone."

"I do?"

Jake shrugged, beginning to pace up and down the corridor. "Sometimes. Usually when your emotions get high. It's kinda freaky, actually. Your hair stands up." He grinned at him and shot over his shoulder, "Maybe you'll learn how to control weather!"

"Been there, done that," Danny muttered. "Not fun."

The two stayed up a little longer, talking through the classes they wanted to observe the most. Danny was excited for Astronomy, and Jake was curious about Care of Magical Creatures. Both agreed on the fact that Defense Against the Dark Arts would be one of the more interesting ones.

They fell asleep quickly, the night blessing them with a dreamless few hours before the sun rose and Danny's alarm on his phone went off to warn them of the journey ahead. After a quick breakfast of pop tarts, coffee, and bananas, the two packed up their things and trudged to the headmaster's office, where Albus and Minerva waited. The witch was holding an old, dilapidated boot, and waved it around when they entered, telling them to hold on to the object.

"Aw, man," Jake whined, coming forward. "Not another portkey."

Ignoring Danny's confused glances, Albus gathered them around the old boot, bid them farewell, and gave Minerva a nod.

"Any second now," Albus told them. "Brace yourselves, and remember: the most trustworthy person you'll find in your stay throughout the year will be Minerva."

With that statement, Jake barely having time to send a skeptical glance his way, the portkey activated. Something tugged at their navels and then suddenly they were airborne, spinning around and around until Hogwarts was far behind, the only things on Danny and Jake's minds being just what mess they'd gotten themselves into.

Chapter End Notes

next up: Danny and Jake finally meet the gang and the plot moves forward!

i may reread harry potter for the sake of the story because i realize im researching a LOT jesus christ

CONCERNING HEADCANONS:

in the episode Switcheroo, Jake plays with Haley's violin as if it were a guitar. since the two instruments are completely different (trust me, i play guitar.....badly) i'd have to infer that Jake knew violin at one point, but probably didn't keep it up, what with dragon business. i also don't see him enjoying it, really. drums fit better, and he has a knack for beat boxing as well.
i hope the thought of danny playing ukulele at one point isn't too far fetched, i just can't get over the thought of it. he's totally got the space art hoe aesthetic underneath all that angstiness and you can FIGHT ME ON THAT (not literally though because i have bad knees)

Danny having ice powers has NEVER made sense to me. the cores are complicated and i don't understand how he'd have gotten ice if he died of electrocution, never having anything to do with cold before. however, i can't remember if i'd already written about ice or not, and the title already alludes to that. so im sticking to that canon piece. doesn't mean i won't be adding some neat electricity stuff, like his hair getting staticky and smelling like ozone. i love the idea of electric core Danny and you bet your ass i'll be using those elements in this story.

the idea of ectoplasm cancelling out magic will be shown more throughout the story later on. i got some fun ideas for it....... but, uh. just know that a lot of my headcanons are based on little details from the show, from art i've seen, or what i think would fit their character ¯\_(ツ)_/¯

also uhhhhh this is irrelevant but im listening to a mashup of Photograph and Helena by oneboredjeu and im cRYING so hard and y'all should definitely check it out

next installment probably won't be for a while as i reALLY need to update my other drafts. please review and tell me what you think! constructive criticism is welcome! :)
"wizards just love to give me more reasons to hate them, huh"

Chapter Summary

Surprise! Jake and Hermione actually become good friends!

Chapter Notes

me at two am, having finished a vine comp for my OCs and arguing with my mom about not wearing a dress to homecoming for the tenth time this week, listening to Lewis Del Mar’s “14 Faces” on a loop for two hours, both legs submerged in ice bags because i did too much exercise the day before: oh! OH! OH! OH! BITCHES!! IM BACK!!1!!1!!

sorry for the long ass wait :’) did you know that the american education system wants to fuck every one of their students over several times a week??

thanks so much for the reviews, though!! i can’t believe people actually like this ahaha it’s super impulsively done

please enjoy this chappie

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Portkeys were Jake’s least favorite method of magical transportation, which was saying something. He’d traveled with the magical elevator to the Isle of Draco, which dropped him through the Earth at dizzying speeds. He’d taken a quick trip with the American Knight Bus when on his way to Los Angeles for a pixie convention. He’d even ridden an underwater mermaid transportation system in which he had to make sure not to fall off, lest he leave the protective barrier allowing him air.

But nothing would beat the incredibly unsettling sensation of that jerk behind the navel, the endless spinning, flying through the air in a way that was completely different from what he was used to as a dragon. And the sudden freefall certainly didn’t help matters. Especially when he took the longest to recover.

Minerva had clearly traveled by Portkey several times before; she managed to land on her feet with a grace that reminded Jake of a cat, stopping a moment to pat her hair down, a few strands of which had come loose from her bun through the high winds.

Danny Fenton had looked like he was going to crash, but was able to phase through the ground before hitting it, then flying back out and stepping tangible onto the street. He grinned, looking pleased with himself.

Jake groaned from his position on the floor, his side burning from the impact of the ground. He was really getting sick of smacking into hard surfaces. “Yo, how high was that?”
“About ten feet,” Minerva answered briskly. “I’ll admit it was higher than normal. Apologies.”

“Need some help?” Danny stretched his hand out to Jake, who took it after a slight moment of hesitation, debating just how important his pride was.

“Thanks,” he said to Danny once he’d been pulled up. “But, uh, dude. Your hand is cold.”

Danny laughed. “It’s a ghost thing.” He looked around the street they’d landed by, in the shadow of one of the buildings. The sun hung high in the sky, shining down and illuminating the near-identical residential buildings lining the road, bright, small lawns standing on either side of each complex. Stocky trees dotted the length of the street, their branches still with the absence of wind. The air was near-stifling, and Jake, whose body temperature was already higher than an average person’s, found himself wishing for somewhere with air conditioning. At Hogwarts, they’d had to rely on the stone walls keeping out the warmth from the sun - and a little bit of magic, no doubt.

“Where are we?” Jake asked Minerva.

“Islington in London,” she said, “as Dumbledore mentioned a week ago.” She stepped out from the shadows and into the street, which was surprisingly not as crowded as Jake would have expected. An old lady was walking her dog, and some kids played together by one of the taller trees, but all in all, things looked pretty empty. The witch pursed her lips. “This isn’t exactly the ideal time to come here. Normally we’d arrive past sundown, when there’s no chance of being noticed, but we’re on a schedule.”

“There’s no one really here, though.” Danny shoved his hands in his pants pockets. A bag was slung over his shoulder, which likely carried some of his own possessions. Jake had also seen him sneaking a ray gun with him on the way out, but had decided not to mention anything. The dragon himself carried a backpack with some clothes to last them a few days and wore a sleeveless red shirt, which was definitely a better choice than the thick t-shirt he’d nearly put on. The temperature was much warmer here than where Hogwarts was.

I thought England was supposed to be cold.

“An unusual thing, that,” Minerva said lightly, “but it works in our favor. Come, children, we need to take advantage of the time. The others would be expecting us soon.” A soft sigh. “We’re a little early, actually. The one time you two come to breakfast on time.”

“I’m a teenage boy,” Jake retorted.

They walked a ways along the street, passing identical buildings with identical lawns and probably identical interior decorating, until they reached what looked like near end of the block. While Minerva reached into her robes and pulled out a piece of paper, Danny stood next to Jake, remarking, “Hey, number twelve’s missing.”

He was right. The house numbers went up chronologically, but where there should have been a twelve skipped straight over to thirteen.

“Well spotted.” Minerva handed them the piece of paper. “Read this, memorize it, and hand it back to me.”

Jake took the piece of paper from Danny, who had read it with furrowed brows. “I just said-”

Danny started.

“The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix is located at number twelve, Grimmauld Place,” Jake read aloud, unwittingly interrupting whatever Danny had been about to say. “But there’s no
Minerva closed her eyes briefly. “I said memorize it, not read it aloud.” She snatched the paper back from Jake, took out her wand, and murmured a quick spell. The small slip of paper burst into flames and she let it fall to the ground in a flutter of ash.

Jake stared at the paper. “Overkill, don’t ya think?”

“Woah!” Danny exclaimed next to him (a little too loud - Jake involuntarily winced and took a step away from him). “The houses are moving!”

Jake looked up in initial confusion, only for a small “holy shit” to escape as he nearly tripped over his feet trying to scramble back.

The space between numbers eleven and thirteen began to rumble, stones grinding against each other as they shifted and moved apart from one another. The two homes, including the lawns in front of them, moved along the ground and compressed into the other buildings surrounding them, and Jake could see people sitting inside, completely oblivious to the noise and movement. In between the two buildings, another stretch of stone became visible, a few windows popping into place, even another goddamn lawn growing in the middle before a door came forward as well, completing the image of another home: number twelve, if the plague hanging at the door was anything to go by.

Danny looked weak. “What the fuck?”

“Oh, yeah,” Jake commented, staring in horror at the open display of magic. “I can see now why y’all do this at night.” He swiveled his head around, relaxing a bit as the people outside stayed focused on their own business.

Minerva’s lips twitched. “The muggles can’t see the house moving unless they read the letter. What I was worried about was them seeing us go in. Two teenage boys and a woman wearing robes suddenly disappearing through a wall between two buildings could be cause for alarm.”

“You’d be surprised how many times that happens in Amity Park,” Danny said in a robotic voice, still staring at the house.

“What?” Jake asked him. “The house appearing out of thin air, or people going through the wall?” By the way he didn’t answer, Jake assumed he needed some time to process. Instead, he turned to Minerva. “You’re lucky the Council hasn’t heard of this yet. This has a large risk of people seeing.”

The professor cocked an eyebrow. “Yes, well, we’ve been registered as Independent for a while now. We have no obligation to report back to our World Dragon.”

“You do now,” Jake shot back. “You guys enlisted our help. That makes you put back in our line of sight. You’re Protected.”

She gave a small sigh. “We can talk about the technicalities later on. Now, I believe we have a meeting to get to.”

Jake grinned. “Lead the way, Professor.”

As they walked up to the front of the door, Danny finally snapped out of his reverie to tap Jake on the shoulder.
“What does Protected mean again?”

“Means we have jurisdiction over them and are obligated to help in times of crisis,” Jake answered.

Danny nodded. “And Independent is when they work out of the eye of the Dragon Council?”

“Look who remembered his lessons!” Jake cheered. “Yeah. If you’re Independent, then you’re responsible for your own race or clan or whatever. We don’t check up on you. I’m pretty sure ghosts are Independent, and so are centaurs.” He turned back to Minerva, who had pressed the doorbell on number twelve. “Now come on, we’ve got a revolution to meet.”

Danny figured his brain hadn’t quite caught up with the fact that magic was indeed real, and it was, like any other thing that should’ve been cool, kicking him in the ass.

A magic school in Scotland with moving portraits, staircases, and questionable classes? Alright, he’d seen some weird stuff in the Ghost Zone. Dora’s castle had many characteristics that Hogwarts shared. Besides, he had plenty of time to lie awake at night and stare at the ceiling, wondering just what the fuck was going on.

So the buildings moving apart were… well, they didn’t make any sense. It went against every law of physics Danny could think of. How was it that only the two buildings moved apart to make room? And somehow were able to maintain their original shape despite being smushed up against the other buildings that hadn’t moved, despite now having an extra home there? Had it always been there? Did it come out of a pocket dimension? Would NASA have an answer? He had no idea.

Even so, the thought of just being able to blame it on magic was… comforting? Maybe that wasn’t quite the word, but it made the most sense at the moment. For the first time in forever, Danny had a concrete thing to blame things on when they didn’t go his way. What had started off as, “The universe hates me!” had now become, “Hey, must be magic, because that exists now!”

Maybe that could be his excuse for everything from now on. Danny, what happened to your homework? Magic. How have you not slept in four days? Magic. How is it that no one in Amity Park has figured out your secret and tried to dissect you yet? I dunno, dude. Magic.

Well, maybe not that last one. Ghost energy cancelled out magical energy. Danny suspected that was why the Portkey dropped them from so high up.

Still. He’d always assumed that people would notice these things. It only took a few months for Amity to realize that ghosts were real. The only reason Danny hadn’t been found out as half-ghost was because his parents were completely blinded by their hatred of ghosts to think about their own son sharing that nature.

But a whole magical society? Right underneath their nose? How?

They existed in myths and legends, so Danny knew that people must have seen something at one point. But that was just it. They were myths. They knew how to stay hidden. Except ghosts. The Dragon Council didn’t seem to care about ghosts staying hidden, which was a little weird, but understandable. It made Danny’s job easier.

It just seemed unrealistic that the secret hadn’t gotten out yet. Surely memory potions weren’t that easy to come by. If they were cheap enough, people would get careless about slipping up. No,
especially in Jake’s society, where he had to go out and buy materials to brew potions instead of just waving a stick around and yelling Latin phrases, memory potions would be expensive. It was basic marketing. Right?

He had no idea. He had absolutely no clue what was going on. At least science made sense. At least NASA used technology… unless they didn’t. Unless the only reason they were able to do so much was because they had access to magical artifacts. Danny was this close to forcibly smashing his own head against the wall. The stupid magical wall that had appeared out of thin air.

_Scream about it later, Phantom_, he told himself. Jake was standing next to him with an irritated expression as he glared at the same wall Danny had been thinking about, no doubt upset about the blatant dangerous use of magic in front of “muggles.” From the stories he’d been told, Danny could safely assume that the Council would be breathing down the wizard’s necks for a long time to come once they found out about this.

That was another thing that confused Danny. Was the Council comprised entirely of dragons that just… sat on their thrones all day? Did they have the equivalent of a White House? Were there different political parties? Did they live in their dragon or human forms?

It was too early for in the day for this. He liked to keep his extensive thinking to a minimum until _at least_ five in the afternoon. Also, some caffeine would be nice.

He was brought out of his reverie by the door (to the house that _shouldn’t be there_) opening to reveal a tall, lanky man with bright orange hair and mismatched clothing. His eyes widened as he saw the witch, exclaiming, “Minerva! How good to see you!”

She gave him a rare smile. “Arthur, hullo.”

“You’re a little early - do you have the representatives?”

“Yes,” she answered, waving Danny and Jake forward. Danny could here some yelling coming from inside, and another voice began to screech - a woman’s - but it was hard to make out individual voices. One look at Jake’s expression gave the impression that whatever was being yelled probably wasn’t nice.

Arthur looked at the two boys in excitement, his mouth turning downwards in a brief frown before opening the door further. “Oh, hullo! You’re much younger than I expected… but come in, all, and do mind the ruckus, our children got a little excited when we returned from Harry’s hearing-”

“Come now, Arthur,” Minerva said with slight exasperation. “You can’t just let us in-”

“The question!” he exclaimed. “Merlin’s beard, you’re all near paranoid. Very well, but I’ll make it quick, I’m sure there are people outside… what was my first reaction at learning of the invention of the mobile phone?”

“You were particularly excited at the fact that one didn’t need to attack a cable to both ends in order to hear one another,” Minerva answered immediately, mirth in her tone.

Arthur flushed a deep red, muttering, “Correct,” and stepping aside to let them in. “Do try not to speak too loudly. We should be getting Mrs. Black’s portrait covered up within a few moments.”

The three stepped through the threshold and through the small hallway, and almost immediately Jake swore. “Yo, what _is_ this place?”

The first thing Danny noticed was the painting. A mean looking woman with pale skin and a
furious expression was screaming bloody murder, shouting things that sounded like “filthy mudbloods” and something about disgracing the House of Black, both of which made no sense to Danny but definitely made him want to phase through the floor and stay there until this whole fiasco was over.

A man with long locks of black hair was struggling to pull a curtain over the painting, trying to shout over it with his own curses. “Arthur, dammit!” he yelled. “Why’d you leave to answer the bloody door at this time?”

“Sorry, Sirius!” Arthur scrambled towards the painting to help pull the fabric back into place, effectively muffling the screaming. She got in another few curses before finally quieting down.

“I hate that woman,” the black-haired man - Sirius - declared.

“My ears are bleeding,” Jake moaned, holding his hands to either side of his head.

Danny took in the gloomy interior of Grimmauld Place: the dark walls, dim lighting… were those heads on the walls?

The place was much quieter without the painting screaming, but chanting was still going on inside. He took a few more steps inside to look around the corner, where the beginnings of a kitchen could be seen. Inside, a few kids around his age, all red-headed, were jumping up and down with their arms around each other, chanting, “He got off! He got off!” and a red-headed woman yelling at them to quiet down.

Sirius turned away from the painting. “Professor!” he said in a much lighter voice. “Glad to see you’ve made it. And these are the representatives, no doubt.”

“I think I’ve gone deaf,” Jake said weakly, hands still over his ears.

Sirius let out a bout of laughter, stepping towards the two and extending his hand. “Sirius Black, pleased to meet you. You’re a lot shorter in person.”

“So people keep telling us,” Danny replied with a small smile, shaking the man’s calloused hand.

Jake removed his hands from his ears to shake Sirius’, speaking in a louder voice than necessary, “What’s with the crazy painting?”

“My dear old mother,” the man said cheerfully. “Don’t worry. As long as you’re not too loud, she shouldn’t cause too much trouble. ‘Course, it would be better if the painting would come down. Bloody enchantments.”

The chanting from the kitchen had died down, allowing the woman from before to come hurrying in. “Oh!” she fussed. “Oh, I’m so sorry I couldn’t come sooner, the children were a little too excited… not exactly a good first impression, I’m sure, but I assure you, it’s not so bad here, once you get used to it.”

“I’m sure,” Jake commented, looking around at the gloomy atmosphere. He sneered at the heads on the walls. “Nice collection.”

Sirius winced. “Oh, believe me, it wasn’t my idea. I inherited this house. The elves here are all barking mad.”

“I’m sure it’s the elves,” Jake spat.
Minerva frowned. “Jacob.”

Danny decided to introduce himself before things got out of hand. “I’m Danny Fenton,” he told the people in the room. “Your, uh, ghost expert. The other guy’s Jake Long, your dragon. House elves are a touchy subject with him.”

_Not that his reaction wasn’t justified, Danny added to himself. House elf heads? What the hell is wrong with these people?_

“I ain’t nobody’s dragon,” Jake said indignantly.

Danny rolled his eyes. _He’s definitely not very diplomatic. “Of course not.”_

The woman’s smile seemed genuine, though, and just a little bit apologetic. “The Black family isn’t known to be very hospitable towards house elves. There’s a long story there which I’m sure Sirius would love to recount—here Sirius gave her a panicked expression, “—but in the meantime, I’d say we should get you two acquainted. I’m Molly Weasley, and you’ve already met my husband, Arthur. Do you have luggage?”

“They’ll only be staying here for a few days until Hogwarts,” Minerva said, “so I told them to pack light. Speaking of which—” she began to turn towards the door, “I should get back to Hogwarts soon. Albus will be expecting me.”

Molly nodded enthusiastically. “Yes, yes, I shan’t keep you any longer. Send Professor Dumbledore my well wishes!”

Minerva nodded. With a swish of her cloak, she’d left through the door again and out into the much more inviting world outside. How she’d get back to Hogwarts, Danny had no idea, but he supposed he shouldn’t question every little thing from now on. It’d just give him a headache.

Arthur Weasley took both their bags to their rooms, saying he’d get a few of his kids to show them where they were later. “We’re a little tight in space at the moment, but we’ve managed to get you two a room together without the others,” he said, hefting both bags. “If Ron complains, you have my permission to breathe fire on him.”

“Awesome, thanks,” Jake replied. Danny couldn’t tell if he was kidding.

They were brought to the kitchen, where the chaos from earlier had died down a bit. Most of the kids there seemed to be Weasleys, if the hair was anything to go by. Two tall, older boys (identical twins, by the looks of it) were still grinning at a shorter, black haired kid with round glasses, looking breathless as he stood next to another redhead who looked closer to Danny’s age. To the side stood two girls, one redhead and the other with a mane of bushy brown curls, both sporting a pair of soft brown eyes.

Jake’s expression since they’d reached Grimmauld Place had only gotten more negative by the minute. By now, Danny could basically read his thoughts as something along the lines of, _I really don’t want to be here, someone please get me out before I set everything on fire._ Danny could relate. (Except for fire bit. He didn’t have that power, unfortunately.) Everything up until this moment had only gotten more stressful.

“Everyone!” Molly trilled, gathering the attention of the kids gathered around. “These are the two representatives who will be staying at Hogwarts this year. Jake and Danny will be part of the Order, so please don’t harass them about meetings—”

“Look a little young to be in the Order, eh?” one of the twins interrupted.
“Yes, the short one looks barely twelve,” the other one continued.

Jake threw his hands in the air. “I hate drawing straws!” he hissed.

Danny snorted. “They’re not wrong.”

“I’m fourteen.”

“Fourteen?” the kid standing next to Glasses said incredulously. “Mum, that’s not fair.”

“The hair doesn’t make him look any older, either,” Twin No.1 muttered. His brother snickered.

“It’s perfectly fair,” Molly said firmly. “Danny and Jake have been handpicked by their particular community to come to Hogwarts. They can handle themselves in a fight and their age shouldn’t matter in this case. Jake especially is our superior in terms of authority, and Danny has the resources to provide us with any help we may need.”

“What kind of help?” Glasses asked.

“That’s classified Order business,” she told him, causing him to look down at the ground angrily.

The bushy-haired girl sighed. “Honestly, you lot are so rude. I’m Hermione Granger,” she told them kindly. “She’s Ginny, the twins are Fred and George - don’t ask which of them is whom, they’ll tell you lies - and the two boys are Ron and Harry.”

Danny struggled to keep up with the names as she pointed to each respective person. He’d especially have trouble with twins; he’d once spent most of middle school believing that a set of identical twins were just one person, until the promotion ceremony in eighth grade when he’d seen them side by side for the first time. Tucker never let him live it down.

Jake fixated his gaze on Glasses - Harry. “You’re the Potter guy?” At the nod given to him, he continued, “Great, I’m basically your bodyguard.”

“What?” Harry Potter asked, staring at him blankly.

Jake grinned. “Y’know, big strong dragon bodyguard! Ya boy’s got some mad skills! You’re lookin’ at the one and only Am-Drag, mad playa Jake-”

Danny cut him off, however enjoyable it was to see the wizard’s expression become more confused by the second. “I think they get the picture, Long.”

Hermione gasped, bounding forward. “Oh! You’re the dragon? A Draco?”

Jake blinked, former bravado disappearing briefly. “Uh…”

“I’ve read all about you,” she babbled. “Is it true that Draco Island is completely warded against anyone who isn’t your race? And this is your human form, right? I haven’t found many books on your kind being shapeshifters, so I’d love if you could tell me about it - how do you transform, exactly? Is all of your body part-”

“Woah, reel it in, sis,” Jake laughed, holding a hand up. “I just used a Portkey, nearly went deaf from a painting, and had to look at house elf heads. Give me a break.”

Hermione took a step back. “Oh, yes, I’m so sorry. Aren’t the heads awful? I’d imagine someone of your standing would be a little cautious of the heads. Wizards are horrid about using elves, in my opinion, I even-”
“No,” Ron groaned, “you got her started on SPEW again. ‘Mione, The house elves are fine with servitute-”

“Only because they’ve been forced into it!” Hermione protested heatedly.

“Mate,” Ron told Jake, “walk away while you still can.”

“Oh, no.” Jake stretched his arms behind his head. “Tell me more. SPEW? Is it like a campaign for house elf rights?”

Hermione nodded eagerly. “Yes, I made badges and everything! I like to sew them clothes, you see, because-”

“They can only be free if given clothes?” Jake finished. He turned to Danny. “I like her.”

Danny laughed. He met eyes with Harry, who had been watching the exchange quietly. The boy’s eyes were an emerald green - not as green as Phantom’s, who looked like they could burn a hole through anything if they stared hard enough - and his bangs were just able to cover a scar reminiscent to a bolt of lightning. Danny was reminded of the electricity from the Portal and had to suppress a shudder; just as he was about to turn away from Harry’s stare, the wizard spoke.

“Are you really a ghost?”

Automatically, Danny replied, “Half-ghost,” but realized that these kids probably didn’t know what it meant. “I’m, like, stuck between the living and the dead,” he elaborated. “Shocked by a ghost portal, so all the ectoenergy merged with me. I have a ghost form.”

Harry nodded. “I thought ghosts were translucent and couldn’t really touch anything, that’s all. But if you have a ghost form too-”

“Well, I’m corporeal,” Danny told him, “so I’m still different. Actually, all muggle ghosts are like that - tangible. You’re thinking of wizard ghosts.”

“Oh…”

This was going to be a long year. So far, it seemed that Hermione was the only one who had done research, and she and Jake were already discussing house elves together with a passion.

Why did Danny think this would be a good idea again?

Oh, right. He hadn’t.

The wall still looked inviting.

Jake decided that Hermione did too much research.

Don’t take him wrong. He appreciated her views on house elves and various other magical issues, like the way goblins, giants, and werewolves were treated by the wizard community, a group of people who just seemed to forget the fact that dragons still existed and now held jurisdiction over them once more. He learned a lot about feral dragons and the illegal selling of them through wizard black markets, and was shocked to know about the dragon kept down in Gringotts Bank that somehow hadn’t really been known about. He remembered goblins being Independent, but it was still against the law to keep other species like that.
Oh, boy, the Council’s gonna love this.

However, it did get to the point where discussions on magical issues ended up turning into an endless interview with Jake. The questions had started off innocently enough (what’s it like being a magical protector, how does the Dragon Council keep track of everything, what do you do in your spare time that doesn’t have to do with being a dragon?), but gradually slipped into a place that made Jake, frankly, quite uncomfortable.

“Where do your clothes go when you transform?”

“Do dragons give birth in their human or reptilian forms?”

“I heard somewhere that a dragon’s powers developed fully after they lost their virginity—”

“Yo!” Jake held up his hands. “No more! None of that! Gross!”

Hermione stopped. They sat in Jake and Danny’s room upstairs, a small guest room with two twin beds that creaked under their weight. Jake was in the middle of filling out a report to send back to New York, which would reach Fu Dog and allow him to send it to the Dragon Council. It spoke mostly of the Order’s efforts (the meetings had been dull, in Jake’s opinion, with little talk of just how severe the war was getting; oh, Voldemort had murdered a few people here in there, but they didn’t seem to be doing anything about it except talk about a weapon and what it could mean for Hogwarts and Harry Potter), and Jake had thrown in some dirt about house elves, the issue on feral dragons, and just how messed up everything had become ever since they’d been registered as Independent. He may have attacked the English Dragon on the matter, since he was supposed to have at least a vague idea of what was happening. Oh, and a few sentences on how much he wanted to go back home.

Danny was on the floor texting his friends, snickering to himself every once in a while. His phone had been near taken apart by an excited Arthur, who wanted to understand just why it worked so well in magical environments. Now that conversation had been painful to watch.

“I’m just curious, is all,” Hermione said defensively.

Ah, shit, now he’d offended her. “Look,” Jake soothed, “I’m loving the attention, really, but I don’t know all the answers to those questions. And some of them are a little weird for you to ask.”

Hermione ducked her head. “Hmm. I suppose so. I’m sorry, Jake. I just get excited.”

“You’ve hurt her feelings, Jacob,” Danny sang from his spot on the floor. Jake flipped him off.

A knock on the door. Ron stuck his head inside the room. “Mum wants you to come down for dinner.” He scowled at Hermione’s place across from Jake, who was glaring at the pile of papers he still had to fill out.

“Thank God.” Jake dumped the reports to the side, then stood up to stretch out his cramping limbs. “Man, I’m ready for bed. How long have we been here?”

“It’s been, like, two days,” Danny said from his spot on the floor. He turned off his phone and jumped up, holding up his hand to Ron on the way out. “High five? No? Right. See you guys downstairs.”

Jake shook his head at Danny’s retreating back. “That was so painful to watch, man, so painful. You gotta give the guy his high fives, he’s already nihilistic enough as it is.”
Ron rolled his eyes. He hadn’t gotten along as well with the two representatives as the others, opting to stay by Harry’s side, who had also distanced himself. Apart from the occasional jealous look as Jake and Danny went into the dining room for another Order meeting, no one really knew what he had against them.

Hermione was, evidently, also fed up. “You’re all awful at making friends,” she announced before making her way out as well, followed by Jake, who sent a cheeky grin at Ron.

“Stealin’ your girl,” he joked, reveling in the way Ron’s brows furrowed in outrage.

Dinner was as delicious as ever - Jake had decided he loved Molly’s cooking from the first bite inside Grimmauld Place. The thought of it being cooked by a wizard was comforting, something he much preferred to Kreacher the house elf serving them. The elf was rude, but so was Sirius to him, and the servitude was clearly something neither of them wanted. As much as Jake hated it, he understood why Kreacher wasn’t able to be set free due to him knowing too much about the Order. The ties the Black family had to Voldemort were something Kreacher was well aware of, even loyal to, and the risk of exposure was too great.

The twins got yelled again for using magic to set the table, as had become custom, and Harry was up to his usual business of getting info out of the adults about the Order. Danny reached for the coffee like the heathen he was, and Jake himself bathed in the attention given to him about his dragon nature. It was especially entertaining to see the wizards try to come up with ways he wasn’t technically in charge of them.

Jokes on all of you! Jake thought smugly. To be Protected means to have a boss!

Ginny was nice - she didn’t ask too many questions and treated him with a level of respect, but still spoke to him as if they were equals, so Jake felt like he could talk to her comfortably enough. She was his age, too, so the two of them bonded over being the youngest ones in the group. Danny kept joking about them going on a “wizard date,” to which Jake replied that she very clearly had a crush on Harry and anyone who couldn’t see it was a dumbass. Besides, he had Rose.

Harry and Danny, on the other hand, got alone surprisingly well. They both shared the same dry humor, and Harry had seemed the most interested when Danny had demonstrated his powers to everyone else for the first time. From what Jake could tell, they didn’t talk much about personal things - he suspected the only reason Danny had managed to open up to Jake was because the dragon kept actively trying to be social - but both Harry and Danny liked to chat about Hogwarts and wonders of the new wizarding world both of them hadn’t grown up in. It was good for Danny to talk to someone who had been just as clueless as he. (It was strange to think that Hermione was muggleborn as well. She seemed to know more about the magical community than Jake did.)

And then there were the twins. Well, they weren’t so bad once you got around the way they kept telling you the wrong names to call them.

“Jacob here is a prankster!” Fred announced while waving his knife around, a piece of steak on the tip.

“We’ve heard great stories of him and the Dragon Council,” George added cheerfully.

Jake laughed. “Oh, man, y’all have no idea how much trouble I got into for pranking the geezers in the Council. Got suspended for a week.”

Hermione gasped as if that were a fate worse than death. “Jake! That was irresponsible!”
“So I’ve been told. But it was so worth it. Anyway, it was on purpose.”

“Why would you lose your powers on purpose?” Hermione screeched, absolutely horrified.

“Wait, what?” Ron asked. “What do you mean, you lost your powers?”

Jake took the time to recount the way he’d decided to take a break from being the American Dragon, the removal of his chi energy which allowed him to transform, and the fiasco that followed. “I still feel kinda bad for my sister,” he snickered, “but at least she knows now not to dismiss her duties as easy. I’ll bet she’s super stressed at the moment too. Hopefully America won’t be in too bad of shape when I get back.”

“It seems you’ve had your share of adventures,” Remus Lupin commented. “Though I do think we need to discuss exactly how your guarding of Hogwarts will work.”

_This again?_ Jake resisted the urge to roll his eyes. He knew what he was going to do. Wasn’t that enough?

“Professor Dumbledore talked about us trying to keep connected to the students in the school,” Danny said nervously, clutching his mug of coffee tightly. “Watch out for danger and stuff. Observe classes, too.”

“Y’all better be on your best behavior,” Jake told them lightly. “Everything you do gets reported back to the dragons. Uh, Dracos. Whatever. Point is, now that you’re back on our radar, you’re gonna have to go through some major changes. Starting with the selling of feral dragons.”

The atmosphere tensed around the table. “Gringotts Bank is run by goblins,” Arthur started. “Yeah, but…” Jake leaned back. “You guys are paying them, aren’t you?” No answer. He sighed. “Look. I can deal with goblins. I do it several times a week. But you need to get word out about the laws of the Council. Y’all have been flyin’ solo for generations now, but now that you’ve reached out, we’re gonna need to get you back in the swing of things. That includes reaching out to your English Dragon.” He paused for a moment, noting the tight lips, ignoring Danny slurping on his coffee religiously. He grinned. “But, hey! We can do that later. I say we spend the next few days enjoying our summer, then we can go buy school materials, and it’s off to Hogwarts!”

“And geometry,” Danny added under his breath.

“Hey, now.” Jake wagged his finger at the ghost. “We don’t talk about math just yet.”

“What kind of classes will you be observing?” Ginny asked. “Is it only for your age group, or…”

Danny shrugged. “Albus was pretty vague on that. As long as we watch at least three different classes a day, we’ll be okay.”

“Three whole classes?” Arthur inquired. “Or can you move from class to class at any time you choose?”

Danny frowned. “Uh… no idea. Jake, help me out?”

“Right, Casper,” Jake said. “I guess it could be three whole classes _or_ periods, as in the time we need to watch, but there are a lot of lessons going on at once, so we could probably get away with jumping from room to room within a single period. I guess.” He took a bite out of his chicken, which had been previously untouched. “We can just ask Bumblebee if we’re not that sure.”
“I wonder who’ll be the next Defense Against the Dark Arts professor,” Hermione mused.

“Think they managed to hire someone?” Ron asked around a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

“Not for very long,” Harry cackled.

Molly looked like she wanted to object to the morbid comment, while Sirius began to laugh loudly.

“Is there really a curse?” Danny asked curiously.

Ron nodded. “Yeah, the rumor is that Voldemort put a curse on the position. Any teacher will be gone by the end of the year.”

“Snape’s been trying to get the spot for years,” Harry added. “Say, do you think if he were to take it, he’d end up leaving Hogwarts, too? Or just go back to being the Potions professor?”

“Now that’s a thought,” Ron laughed.

_Discussing which teachers will make it to the end of the year, Jake thought. Maybe Hogwarts ain’t as different as I first thought._

He laughed. Yeah, right.

“You okay, Dragon Breath?” Danny snorted.

Jake huffed. “What, a guy can’t laugh?”

“That was a really belated laugh.”

“Yeah, like you’re still working on _dying_?”

Danny cried in mock outrage, and Fred and George howled with laughter.

“Oh, I _like_ this one!” Fred - it might’ve been George - cried.

Dinner passed by smoothly; Jake and Danny helped out with the dishes, then both retreated to their rooms, where they waited for the rest of the house to fall asleep before discussing the year. Tomorrow everyone would go to Diagon Alley to get the rest of the school supplies, wait another day or so, and then it was off to Hogwarts again. They’d need to be alert, have a system on how things would operate, and figure out a way to report back to the Ghost Zone - Clockwork hadn’t shown up yet, so things must have been going smoothly, and Amity Park didn’t have any horrible accidents yet - but now that things were finally being set into motion, both boys needed to be ready for what was to come.

“A whole year,” Jake said softly so as to not wake anyone up. “We gotta do this for a year.”

Danny smiled at him, knowing Jake could see him even in the darkness of the room thanks to his enhanced eyesight. “You only live once, right?”

“Well.” A beat. “Dunno how that’d apply to _you_.”

Danny’s laughter was one of the last things Jake heard before exhaustion swept over him and he finally fell asleep.
REALLY hoping the chapters will pick up their pace after this one. i know things have been slow and i'm sorry for that! next one will definitely have diagon alley, the train ride, and the sorting ceremony. after that we should be breezing through the days a little quicker.

also: guess who came up with an entire governing system for the Dragon Council! this bitch!!

i'm not entirely sure if i'll write it all down here, but small allusions to it and a brief explanation will occur. i'm actually working on another adjl fanfic which really relies on dragon law (it's a reveal story to the whole world, so you know the government's involved) and it'll be explained more in depth there. i have a whole essay written on the subject. it's a problem.

kinda scared that Jake and Danny-boi’s relationship is moving along too quickly to be realistic??? Jake is already aggressively social but Danny is actually super closed off and i just hope im doing them justice ahhhh

im also lowkey upset that this is set in the early 2000's so i can't really use popular slang like "mood" or fatalistic humor like danny would totally do. im THIS close to completely fucking over the timeline just so i can throw in some vine references in there. i hate myself

keep the reviews coming. my crops are dying. think of the children! of the next update!!

ily guys
Chapter Summary

Jake gets political and Danny is afraid of heights (☞゚∀゚)☞

Chapter Notes

ever wondered what it’d be like to sneeze while eating? well, thanks to this fucking moron, you’ll know that it is a Very Bad Idea!!

(i snorted a sandwich and nearly gave myself a sinus infection)

i know i said next chapter would be diagon alley, the train ride, and the sorting ceremony, but by the time i hit 10k words i figured i'd just cut it in half lmao. don't worry tho, i'll be uploading the rest of it directly after this chappie so you still get everything i said you would (plus an Extra Spicy chapter to make up for the month-long wait). this is just a way to make it easier to digest + to break it up a bit so it doesn't drag on too much. that being said, i hope this chapter isn't too uneventful hhhn

(btw, i caved. we're bringing in the memes. what are you gonna do, sue me?)

(please don't sue me im a minor and only have like twenty bucks in my wallet and my parents don't know i write fanfiction in my spare time)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was time for Diagon Alley, and Jake would not shut up.

The dragon had always been talkative, aggressively social, and liked overusing the words “ass,” “bitch,” and “fuck” (mostly to describe either the situation they were in, the reports being sent to the Dragon Council in the morning, or the idea of drawing straws), but for once, he actually seemed excited to go wherever it was they needed to get their books.

“I’ve heard a lot about Diagon Alley from Nigel,” Jake rambled as they approached a dingy looking pub. The sign creaked as it swung slightly in the wind, faded words spelling out The Leaky Cauldron. “The dude never actually went to Hogwarts, I don’t think - might’ve been homeschooled - but anyway, if there was thing he liked talking about more than himself, it was this place.”

“It’s a marketplace, right?” Danny asked as he eyed the wizards in front of them. Ron was complaining about how cramped it had been in the taxi, something Jake had insisted upon after the fiasco with the Portkeys. Danny was secretly grateful; these days, any chance at normalcy was welcomed with open arms.

“Yeah, basically.” Jake peered at the pub’s sign as they stepped through the door. “There’d better be wards around this place.”
Danny was about to ask him what kind of wards, exactly, only for the words to die in his throat as his eyes processed everything in front of him.

The pub was very clearly not a muggle space; it was a little shabby and dirty and not too far off from the pubs he’d seen back in Amity, but the people occupying the area seemed to hold a much looser standard of fashion. Mismatched clothing, colors clashing horribly in a way that had Danny about ninety percent sure he could hear Paulina screeching from all the way back in America, as well as the traditional wizard robes all pointed to the idea of magical underworld. Atop a table, a few older men played a game of what, at first glance, appeared to be chess, were it not for the pieces violently attacking each other on their own. At another table by the bar, a witch sat and read a newspaper (with moving pictures, Danny noted distantly), absently stirring the air above her glass with her finger as it spun around slowly on its own.

“Neat, right?” Jake leaned in close to Danny’s ear. “Fu Dog told me about a few safe spaces for magicals that humans can’t get into. Sometimes it leads into a separate, more well-known place, which is what we’re going to do.”

“Uh-huh…” Danny found it hard to focus on the dragon’s words as he watched the chess game, enthralled by the wizards’ enthusiasm as a bishop shattered a poor pawn.

“Tom!” Arthur greeted an old, bald man working behind the bar. “How have you been, old chap?”

“Arthur, long time no see,” Tom laughed. “Doing swell, thanks for asking!”

The two of them exchanged pleasantries for a few moments longer until Molly tapped her husband on the shoulder and reminded him of their schedule. With Danny listening to Jake chatter on about Diagon Alley as they stayed behind the other kids, the group moved around to the back of the pub and through a door that led to a small courtyard outside.

They stopped before a brick wall. Danny looked over at Jake, who looked just as confused as him. “There’s a lot of magic here,” the dragon mumbled. “But I don’t know how to get there.”

They watched as Arthur took out his wand and tapped a few bricks in a seemingly random sequence. He nodded to himself, took a step back, and grinned back at Danny and Jake. “Welcome to Diagon Alley!”

Danny barely heard him. He was too busy staring at the moving bricks.

They began rolling away from the center of the wall, around the same area Arthur had been tapping, folding into one another in much the same way Grimmauld Place had. Before long, an archway had appeared in the wall.

“Yo, that is sick,” Jake exclaimed.

Their hosts stepped through the archway first. Harry looked back at Danny, whose mouth was hanging open, and grinned. “It gets better,” he promised, stepping through the archway.

“C’mon!” Jake pulled at Danny’s arm. Together they hurried through the archway, eyes blowing wide at the sight laid before them.

The first thing Danny would use to describe Diagon Alley would be crowded; witches and wizards were crammed together on a street that was lined with various shops, and as the group moved into the street (Jake holding on to Danny’s sleeve for dear life with his tiny stature - oh, Danny would tease him so much for that), he could make out the oddities inside each store that labeled them as magical. A sweets shop selling candy that was colored eccentrically and advertised things Danny
would rather not put in his mouth; a shop which, at first glance, would’ve been a sports store with all the balls and gloves and knee pads in the storefront windows, were it not for the broomsticks being showcased and the kids crowding around them, yelling about flying; a strange store which advertised cauldrons and herbs he hadn’t even heard of, not to mention the rather disturbing stuff floating in jars.

“Fenton!” Jake yelled into Danny’s ear over the cacophonous chatter of wizards all around them and tugged at his sleeve again. “Stop standing there like an idiot and keep moving so we don’t get lost!”

Danny nodded, still gawking openly. He hurried after the heads of red that stood tall above the crowd, pushing past different people with mutters of sorry and excuse me and seriously debating whether or not it was worth it to just turn intangible and walk through everyone. It’d certainly freak people out.

They rejoined the group (Molly fussing over them like a mother hen) and made a game plan of where to head to next: They’d go to two places called Slug and Jiggers Apothecary and Flourish & Blotts for school supplies together, then everyone would split up into groups and hunt for other supplies they may need separately. Arthur suggested going into Gringotts Bank first in order to grab some extra money, and before Danny knew it, they were pushing their way through the crowd and making their way down to the large white building at the end of the street.

“Is this like a normal - I mean, muggle bank?” Jake asked Ron as they made their way up the steps. “I mean, how do they get you your money?”

Ron snorted. “Oh, it’s a wild ride, alright. You’ll see exactly what it’s like.”

Danny furrowed his brows, and Jake frowned in confusion; but Hermione, who had been chatting with Harry as they walked beside the redhead, just sighed. “Don’t mind him, Jake. Gringotts doesn’t use machines to get the money, if that’s what you mean.” A beat. “Really, his pun was spot on. It is a ride.”

Danny was about to ask what pun exactly, because he could always appreciate a good one, but it was usually better if he actually understood it - then they’d stepped through the gigantic doors of the bank, and he had to bite his tongue in order to stop himself from saying something that might’ve been very rude and possibly earned him a punch from Jake.

“Oh, hey, goblins,” Jake commented as they walked down the hall, Danny staring at the tiny… men? The people sitting behind desks. The tables towered above his head as the goblins organized sheets and stamped envelopes, their long, spindly fingers working expertly.

At the very end of the hall, Molly and Arthur stood talking to a goblin, who stared at them with an unimpressed expression. Thin, silver hair was slicked back, beady black eyes darting toward the approaching children. The goblin’s gaze lingered on Danny, then swept over to rest on Jake. It pointed a long, thin finger at the fourteen-year-old.

“Draco,” said the goblin. “What is your business here?”

Jake grinned cockily, leaning forward as he made his way forward with an exaggerated gate. Danny rolled his eyes at the display. “So, you recognize me, huh? Wouldn’t have guessed any different, after all, I am pretty famous-”

“I can sense your chi,” the goblin replied dryly. “Most magicals can. Granted, our particular race of goblins is better at that than the rest of our species. At any rate, I have no idea who you are.”
Jake seemed to deflate a little. “Oh. Okay, cool.” His mouth twitched. “Anyway, I’m the American Dragon, Jake Long. Hey, you don’t happen to know where the English Dragon lives, I need to have a chat with them about responsibility—”

“We are registered as Independent.”

“Never mind, then,” Jake immediately shot back. He crossed his arms, leaning into Danny to whisper, “Never really liked goblins, the rude little—”

“I think he can hear you,” Danny murmured back, aware of the goblin’s glare as Jake continued to gripe.

Molly decided in that moment to bring attention back to herself. “Griphook,” she said, “you don’t mind opening up Harry’s vault while we’re at it as well? He hasn’t had access to his money all summer…”

Griphook nodded curtly. “Yes, as long as he has his key.”

Through some persuasion, Danny and Jake were allowed to go down with the Weasleys, Hermione, and Harry to the vaults. Of course, after realizing the vaults were literally vaults down in the ground, the two had expected a staircase, maybe a spiral, made out of stone for added dramatic effect. (The wizards were so extra about everything it was almost painful. It reminded Danny of the time Sam tried out a Tumblr account, which had only lasted a few months. It was better not to think of that time.)

Instead they were faced with a goddamn roller coaster.

Danny blinked down at the small, shabby cart that was supposed to carry everyone down to the vaults. “Well, that’s not ideal.”

“Yeah.” Jake grabbed Danny by the arm. “We’re just gonna, uh, go and wait outside.”

“Wouldn’t you be used to this?” Harry asked them. “I mean, can’t you both fly?”

“See, the thing is,” Jake said, “I’m banned from flying until the school year starts - bit of a head injury. And Fenton here is, uh… afraid of heights.”

Danny nodded earnestly. “Absolutely terrified.”

Molly frowned at them. “Well, be sure not to get lost. We’ll be up soon in no time, then we’ll get to finishing up with our shopping.”

“Got it!” Jake shot her a thumbs up and proceeded to pull Danny out back into the main hall of Gringotts Bank.

Danny waved at the people they’d left behind, noticing how Griphook turned his eyes to the ceiling as if asking a higher being what he’d done to be in his current position.

It wasn’t until after they were outside that Danny realized what he’d said.

“Long, holy shit,” he groaned as the two made their way down the stairs outside of the building. “Why’d you tell them I was afraid of heights? I’m a ghost, Ancients—”

“I panicked,” Jake defended.

Danny sighed, linking his arms together with Jake’s. “What now?”
“You’ll have to spend the rest of the year pretending to be terrified of heights or be forever branded as a lying little-”

“I’m talking about Diagon Alley.”

“Ah, yeah, right, right. Jakey’s got it. Uh…” He peered around the crowded street, eyes lighting up after a moment. “How ‘bout a candy store?”

“We don’t have money.”

“We don’t have to buy anything.”

“We can’t go into a candy store and not buy something. It makes us look suspicious.”

Jake groaned. “Fine. What about the pet store? Magical Menagerie? I asked Arthur while we were walking, he says they’ve got a lot of magical animals that students bring to Hogwarts.”

The two agreed on the store and made their way through the throng of wizards, making sure to keep a firm grip on one another so as not to get separated. Danny felt nervousness build up from the amount of bodies pressing into him; he’d always been a little claustrophobic, something that had only grown as the possibility of being strapped down to a table for dissection suddenly became much more likely.

Eventually, though, they reached the pet store, where Jake immediately let out a gasp of, “Is that a fucking firecrab?”

“Jake,” Danny hissed. “There are people here.”

“Oh - oh my God,” Jake whispered excitedly, completely ignoring Danny in favor of hurrying towards the creature sitting in a cage in the back of the room. “My dude, this is - this is a legit. Firecrab. I’m gonna cry.”

Danny let out a laugh and looked around the room for himself. Out of everything he’d seen so far in the little time he’d spent in the wizarding world, this had to be the most normal: sure, the owls were a little weird, and he’d definitely never heard of a firecrab, but there were cats here, cats and toads and even a few bowls with fish, and it made him want to weep with joy at the wonderful normalness of it all.

There were only two other people in the shop, not including Jake and Danny. The clerk was a woman who looked to be in her twenties with dyed blue hair pulled into a tight braid, looking bored out of her mind. She was currently tending to a kid about Danny’s age. He was a little pudgy, with hair that might have been blond once but seemed to have darkened with time. As Danny drew nearer, he noticed a toad snuggled in the kid’s hands.

“It’s just, he hasn’t been eating a whole lot, and I’m afraid to leave him be,” the boy chattered on, seemingly oblivious to the clerk’s apathy. “He likes to run, you know? And, well, I was wondering if you had any suggestions on diet changes, you know, so that he’d eat a little more, and-” He broke off when he noticed Danny standing awkwardly to the side. “Um, apologies, can I help you?”

Danny started, his face flushing. He’d been leaning over the counter to catch a glimpse of the bright purple snails moving around in a container, and had unwittingly stepped into the boy’s personal space. “Uh, sorry.”

“No worries,” the boy said shyly. He stuck out his hand. “I’m Neville.”
Danny gave him a small smile, shoulders tensing as he was thrust into introductions. Dammit, he was awful at starting conversations. “I’m, uh, Danny Fenton. Nice toad,” he remarked, feeling incredibly awkward.

Neville beamed. “Thank you! And it’s nice to meet you, Danny. Say, where are you from? I can’t quite place your accent…”

“I’m American,” Danny said. Then, because he figured he might as well keep the conversation going instead of making things even more awkward, “Do you go to Hogwarts?”

Neville nodded. “Yes, fifth year. You too?”

“I’m staying for the year with a friend.” Danny jabbed his finger in Jake’s general direction. “No way!” Neville laughed.

“Yeah, it’s kinda-”

"Fenton," came a frazzled voice from behind him. Danny whirled around to come face to face with Jake, whose eyes were wide. The dragon grabbed him by the shoulders. “Dude, we gotta - we gotta get the firecrab. C’mon. I’m sure we can find some loose change somewhere, I’ve wanted one of these ever since Gramps made me do a report on them-” He blinked, just noticing Neville. “Oh, hi. Who’s this?”

“This is Neville,” Danny said. “He’s going to Hogwarts, too.”

Jake grinned. “Aw, dude, sweet! Guess we’ll see ya there, huh? Anyway-” eyes flicked back to Danny, “-I’m telling you, there should be some money… Or! You know what? Can’t you, like, stick your hands through walls? What about we rob-”

“We are not robbing anything,” Danny said loudly at the same time Neville asked, “What do you mean, stick your hands through walls?”

Danny winced. “Ah, nothing. It’s an inside joke.”

Neville looked like he’d bought it. He shrugged, hefting his rather large toad in his hands, and said, “Well, I’ll leave you two to it. I need to find something for my toad. I’ll see you in Hogwarts, then?”

Danny nodded. Jake gave him a thumbs up.

Neville smiled at them one last time before turning to the clerk again. She looked at him, sighed, and reached down under the desk to bring out a bag full of some herbs. “Should help some,” she said. “One galleon.”

It was after Neville had left that Danny finally turned back to the snails. “Hey, Jake,” he said, pointing at the slimy creatures. “tag yourself.”

Jake snorted. “Clearly I’m the plant they’re climbing on. Too beautiful to resist.”

Danny laughed. “Great, ’cause I’m the one that fell on its back in the corner and can’t get up.”

They met up with the group not long after; Hermione looked a little green, which only made Jake
all the more glad that they hadn’t taken the ride down to the vaults. Portkeys were enough, thank you very much.

If he was lucky, he’d get everyone to pile into a taxi again on the ride home. Ron’s face was priceless when he realized that muggles cannot, in fact, make the inside of the car larger than the outside.

Everyone had trooped together to go buy the books, where Danny had gasped at literally everything he saw (and, okay, Jake had to admit that the things here were pretty cool, especially compared to his measly collection of magical items back in NYC. They had firecrabs here, forfuck’s sake, a species that had gone extinct in America some fifty years back). While Ron and Hermione bickered over the value of the classes they had to take, Harry and Danny entertained themselves by finding the most specific book titles they could on the magical world. Jake’s personal favorite (which was found by Harry) was *One Hundred Ways to Avoid Smelling Like Dung in Time for a Party After Being Chased by a Group of Angry Female Giants.*

They gradually moved from Flourish and Blotts, arms laden with heavy textbooks, in favor of the store across the street, which would provide the wizards with supplies for Potions class. Slug and Jiggers Apothecary graced the group with dim lighting (not that it was any problem for Jake, who had enhanced senses), a foul stench that sent Danny into a coughing fit, and shelves of jars of things that Jake would rather not think about.

Ginny wrinkled her nose at the herbs hanging from the ceiling. “Ugh, the smell.”

“You and me both, sis,” Jake moaned, pressing his nose into Danny’s sleeve in the hopes of filtering the air. Danny coughed again, then patted Jake’s head sympathetically.

Hermione insisted on taking the two all around Diagon Alley - and, really, how could Jake say no? So far, this was the first place in magical England that didn’t make him want to punch something.

So while Ginny went to buy the rest of the school supplies for her year with her parents, the trio took Danny and Jake outside and to an ice cream shop near the Leaky Cauldron.

Florean Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlour had some of the best ice cream Jake had ever tasted - and he lived in New York. The owner of the shop had greeted them with friendly smiles, asking Harry how he was doing, leading Jake to think they’d probably been acquainted before. Danny didn’t want to order anything at first but was eventually convinced by the dragon. (“Who knows how long we’ll have to survive on pop tarts!”)

Jake ordered the “Apple Crumble,” the same thing as Hermione, while Danny went and got simple chocolate ice cream. Ron rolled his eyes at that, ordering a Sticky Toffee Pudding, Harry shrugging and getting the same thing.

“I have to admit,” Jake said after a few bites of his ice cream, “y’all have really good food. Definitely beats leftover pizza.”

“Beats evil ghost turkeys,” Danny laughed, ignoring the odd looks he got.

They didn’t stay there long, of course. Hermione insisted they look at Eeylops Owl Emporium, as well as Ollivanders. Ron pleaded with her to let them go to Gambol and Japes, a wizarding joke shop. Harry piped up with the suggestion of Quality Quidditch Supplies.

In the end, they went to the Quidditch shop first, as Danny was curious about the sport. While Ron and Harry smothered him with information, Hermione pulled Jake away to talk.
“How are you feeling about everything?” she asked him. Her brown curls fell around her face as she leaned against a table sporting another broomstick. “Danny told me neither of you are exactly pleased to be here. Well, he said that about you, but the both was implied.”

Jake shrugged. “Honestly? From this region specifically, I’ve seen a lot of bad stuff—” he thought back to the elf heads, “—but it may be wrong to generalize. Every species has its problems. Dragons tend to have slanted views of punishment. It’s a really uptight system we have with not a lot of room to change things, and I think it may be the same with wizards. You guys have a Ministry that’s similar to the Council, you’re pretty big on keeping the secret of magic safe, but you also don’t really see past your own faults.”

Hermione blinked. “Oh?”

He sighed, running a hand through his hair. “Look at it this way: Harry and Voldemort—oh, c’mon, you’ll have to get used to the name eventually—he saw the dude rise from the dead last year, but every time he tells someone, they call him batshit crazy. They’re even saying Bumblebee’s a crackpot. Now, tell me this: if two of your students disappear for a bit during a tournament and come back with one dead and the other talking about the fuckin’ Dark Lord rising again, do you really think it’s a good idea to just dismiss those claims and talk shit about him in the newspaper? Don’t you think some precautions, or at least keeping an eye out, could make more sense?”

“Of course I think that, Jake.”

“But the Ministry doesn’t,” Jake shot back. “They want to keep their jobs, I get it, but turning a blind eye isn’t gonna help. It’s gonna make things worse. Saying you hope something isn’t going to go wrong, or that you’re sure it won’t go wrong—just sending condolences to the family of this poor murdered kid, then calling another kid crazy for warning everyone—it won’t help. It’s gonna blow up in your faces. And I think the only way you’re going to win is if you fight back, regardless of what the Ministry says.”

“Don’t you think we’d like to do that?” Hermione said. “We’re teenagers, Jake. there’s nothing we can do except help get Harry through whatever this is—”

“That’s it!” Jake jabbed his finger at her. “That’s your flaw. You guys are afraid of breaking the rules. It’s because you have a lot of it. And I know what it’s like, because the Council is very much the same, but you can’t let this get worse. Why do you think the Order was made? The Minister doesn’t know about it. But they don’t let kids in, either, and personally, I think that’s dumb. Your age doesn’t determine your willingness to fight. You deserve to know what’s going on.”

“Then tell us,” Hermione pleaded.

“I will,” Jake announced. “Goddammit, I will. This is going to get out of hand eventually. Right now, nothing big’s happening. But once it does, if they don’t let every single person in on the shitstorm going on, I’ll fly around the world and tell y’all myself.” He glared at her. “I’m not the kind of person to stand by and watch these things fall apart.”

Hermione gave him a calculating look. “Be careful where you say these things, Jake. Some people may think you’re being unfair—we’re doing the best we can. People have died—”

“The Order of the Phoenix is doing something,” Jake cut her off again, “and they’re doing great, don’t get me wrong. But what they’re doing isn’t always going to keep the public safe. It’s not a permanent solution. They aren’t a big organization, and they definitely aren’t credible, at least in the eyes of the press I mean, you have a werewolf, a convicted murderer, and a whole tragic story
with a fifteen-year-old kid as the only witness… yeah. What you need are numbers. A following. More people who understand what’s happening and can directly fight back. The public. You need an army.”

Her eyes narrowed at the suggestion.

“Hey, Harry-” Ron turned around to his best friend, sporting a pair of hot pink Quidditch goggles. “What do you say?”

Harry laughed. “Suits you!”

Danny’s mouth twitched. He discretely snapped another picture of the broomsticks being displayed and sent it to the group chat consisting of Sam and Tucker back in Amity, holding back a laugh at Tucker’s response of, wow they really love the cliches huh. He didn’t entirely understand what the sport was and why they felt the need to ride broomsticks, of all things, but he had to admit it was far more interesting than football. He sometimes thought Dash was incapable of speaking anything other than the over-glorified sport.

He was brought into the conversation as a new voice entered. Looking up from his phone, he noticed with a start that Ron and Harry had become tense as they looked at the newcomer, a squat girl who looked to be a few years older than them.

“All I’m saying,” she told the two boys, “is that Potter shouldn’t be spreading these rumors around. It only creates a panic, and it brings him a bad name-“

“It should be causing a panic!” Harry interrupted. “He’s back, and all you lot think is that I’m lying-“

“Well, what are we supposed to think? That you really saw You-Know-Who rise from the dead? Yeah, real believable.”

“Oi, that’s my best mate,” Ron snapped.

Danny, watching as Harry clenched his fists angrily, thought it’d be a good idea to cut in. “And I’m a friend of theirs, too. What’s going on?”

“This one-“ Ron jabbed a ginger at the girl, who looked on impassively, “-is calling Harry a liar and Dumbledore a crackpot.”

“Because it’s true!” the girl insisted.

Harry let out a shout and launched himself at her, but Danny was quick, and in a moment, the angry wizard had passed through the girl harmlessly and lay heaving on the floor.

Danny pulled him out and away from the witch, then let go of his wrist and allowed the intangibility to bleed away. He glared at Ron, who looked about ready to hex someone, then shifted his gaze to the girl, taking in her shell-shocked stare with a wince.

Damn, he thought, there goes our plan of laying low until we reach Hogwarts.

“Merlin’s Beard!” she shrieked, stepping back from Danny. “What the bloody hell was that!”

Danny chose instead to watch Harry pick himself off from the floor, still wheezing from what was likely an uncomfortable sensation (he’d been told by Tucker that intangibility, to humans, felt like
a sudden numbness across the whole body). He ignored the clench in his chest as he replayed the
girl’s horror in his mind, wondering just how terrifying he was to people.

A whistle blew behind him. “Shit went down, huh?”

“Oh, thank God,” Danny muttered, whirling around to take Jake by the shoulders. “We’re leaving,”
he told Harry and Ron.

Ron frowned. “But-“

“Now,” Danny said more forcefully, shooting a glance at the still-paralyzed witch.

Together the group left the shop, Hermione asking the boys what had happened, with Danny and
Jake walking side by side in silence.

The experience in the shop had soured Danny, Ron, and Harry’s moods, though Jake still insisted
they go to the joke shop for a few minutes, and after Hermione reluctantly agreed, they made their
way down the road.

Harry ended up buying a few candies and offered to share; Jake happily accepted, taking a handful
of chewy fire-breaths to try out later. “Maybe it, like, cancels out my own fire breathing,” he joked.

Danny smiled, but his heart wasn’t in it. He couldn’t get the image of the girl’s shocked expression
out of his head; did wizards really see ghosts and intangibility as such an otherworldly thing? He
could chalk it up as simply a gut reaction, but still.

How would the rest of Hogwarts react to his ghostliness when he, as Clockwork told him to, used it
so freely?

His “mentor” said he’d keep him safe, but Danny couldn’t help but think that the last thing he’d
need was physical help from being restrained.

Loneliness was far worse.

The last few days had been hectic, to say the least; what with Harry’s hearing, the accusations
against him and Dumbledore, the arrival of the two representatives, and - most recently - getting
the Hogwarts letters and having to buy supplies for school (not to mention Ron and Hermione
becoming prefects, something Danny and Jake had only heard about much later in the day due to
both still being asleep), the entire House of Black was in a frantic state. Sirius spent most of his
time grumbling about staying indoors, Danny continued to make bad space puns and drink ungodly
amounts of caffeine, and Jake would moan to Hermione about the reports he still had to fill out for
the Dragon Council. Harry seemed to brood more often, too, and Ginny was wary of getting in the
middle of all the drama. If that weren’t enough, Ron decided it’d be a good idea to team up with
the twins and try to glean information about the Order from Danny and Jake.

“Anything new?” Fred Apparated right next to the halfa, who immediately started choking on his
coffee.

“Nothing much,” said the very sleep-deprived halfa after he stopped coughing. “We talked about
the wea-“

“The weather!” Jake cut in hastily, slapping a hand over Danny’s mouth (and rather harshly, as the
ghost would complain about later). “We talked loads about the weather. Oh, I could go on and on about the sunny weather, the totally not important weather which Danny should not be talking about and which you shouldn’t be taking advantage of because he hasn’t even finished his first cup this morning, the poor bastard.”

Fred shrugged. “Suit yourself,” he said, and Apparated away.

All while having to deal with chores, mind you. Cleaning the house had proved to be a rather tedious task, especially with the boggart that had turned up sometime during the days spent there; and when Danny learned just what the creature did, he found himself glad it was Molly on the receiving end of it and not him, however guilty that made him feel.

So, yes, things were hectic, and even more so when they had to leave for King’s Cross.

“We’re going to be late!” Molly shrieked over the sound of Mrs. Black’s painting. “Fred, George - oh, for the love of - Stop bewitching things! I said stop it!”

“Blimey,” Ron groaned as he dragged his trunk downstairs, Danny lugging his own bags behind him. “I can’t wait to get out of his house. Harry, do you agree?”

“Can’t wait to get to Hogwarts,” Harry replied, who, with his skinny frame, had trouble carrying his luggage downstairs as well. He turned to Danny. “Where’s Jake?”

Danny shrugged. “Probably gelling his hair. Hey, you need help with that?” He pointed at the trunks.

“Er…” Harry looked down at him and Ron’s trunks. “You sure you can carry these? They’re quite heavy.”

Danny waved his free hand dismissively. “Yeah, I got it - ghost powers, remember?”

And so one thing let to another, and within minutes, Danny had helped everyone move their trunks downstairs by floating down the stairs in his ghost form, well aware of the how much lighter something seemed once his ectoenergy touched it. It was strange, though, to see Fred and George attempt to bewitch their trunks to float again while their mother wasn’t looking, only for their magic to splutter and the trunks to drop to the ground after only a few inches of levitation.

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“Ah,” Danny said, still as Phantom, “yeah. That. That may be me. Sorry.”

Ectoenergy cancels out magic. Or, at the very least, it slows it down.

Danny let the white rings wash over him to return him to human form. Jake ran downstairs not too long after the trunks had been moved downstairs, carrying his own bag over his shoulder. With his enhanced strength (and the kid was strong, as Danny found out one morning in the Room of Requirement when he lifted the bed single-handedly in order to reach a tennis ball that had rolled underneath), it wasn’t too much of a problem.

“Can someone please turn off that hag’s bitching?” Jake whined just as the curtain to Mrs. Black’s painting was pulled shut by a very disgruntled Sirius.

“Did you know Danny’s voice echoes when he’s all glowy?” Ron asked no one in particular, and Jake gave him an odd look, Hermione scoffing in the background.

“I helped move the stuff down as Phantom,” Danny clarified.
“Oh. Yeah, isn’t it weird?” Jake laughed, then hefted his bag further to bring it to where Arthur and Molly were.

“How’s the damn guard!” Molly wailed at the same time Danny trailed after Jake. “Podmore should’ve been here by now!”

“Mum, don’t shout,” Ginny pleaded, “we don’t want to wake the painting again.”

Oh, yeah. There was supposed to be a special bodyguard for Harry. Well, a wizard bodyguard.

After a quick, heated discussion, Sirius ended up transforming into his Animagus form - a large, shaggy, black dog - and insisted on accompanying Harry instead of the official bodyguard. While Jake was busy staring slack-jawed at the display of shapeshifting into something other than a mythical beast, Danny wondered just how much they’d be needed as actual bodyguards when it seemed everyone preferred the wizards doing so.

Ah, well. Less work for him.

Then suddenly they were ushered into another car, this time larger on the inside, and on their way to King’s Cross. Ron brandishing his Prefect badge, Hermione chastising him for being so boastful (leading to them bickering about “abusing their power,” as Hermione put it), and Harry looking out the window with a wistful expression; with the twins and Ginny sat together in the back, the older brothers trying to coax their sister into buying some obscure wizard candy; the parents at the wheel, and Sirius as a dog fighting to sit comfortably in the space provided; and Danny and Jake, both equal parts excited and nervous for the new school year.

Jake had managed to steal Danny’s phone from him at one point and used it to play some bad pop music, to which Danny complained for several minutes until they compromised on an AJR album. Arthur especially portrayed much excitement at the seemingly impossible displays of technology in such a magic-heavy hotspot, pushing Danny into a long-winded explanation as to how ghost energy worked.

It would be a long ride, but at least they had music and a dragon singing loudly off key to lift everyone’s spirits, right?

Chapter End Notes

i know this is supposed to be Humor, but y’know i couldn't resist sprinkling in some angst,. it's the only thing i'm moderately good at

someone pointed out last chapter that it was very Jake centric and i mentioned this one having a strong possibility of focusing more on Danny, and it looks like i was right - i think the pov will really depend on what im writing about and which character would have the strongest reactions to the stuff happening inside it. since chapter six is (finally) gonna do some classes, i think the povs should be more evened out ^_^

let's all take a moment to thank sparknotes for reminding me what actually happens in the book because i have No Fucking Clue

have a lovely day!
hem hem motherfuckers

Chapter Summary

In which Jake Long rekindles his hatred of the color pink and Danny wonders how the McHeck™ these kids have survived without Bill Nye and Kahoot.

Chapter Notes

s i g h these chapters should’ve gone up days ago but i just had a knee surgery to replace my long as fuck ligaments and the only thing i’ve had the mental capacity to do is sleep and watch supernatural lmao

hope everyone's been having a nice day! here's ur second part!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

King’s Cross station was bustling with activity, every corner packed with families carrying carts and luggages around. Muggle business men stepped out of the way of the children with disgruntled looks on their faces, and all around, staff members attempted to calm down the chaos.

One family, made mostly of redheads but also accompanied by three black-haired boys, one girl with bushy curls, and a shaggy black dog, stood in front of the brick wall separating platform 9¾.

Danny stared at Molly. “You want us to what?”

“Ohkay,” Jake muttered, “okay okay okay okay okay-”

“Run at the wall if you’re nervous,” Harry advised. “Gets it over with quickly.”

They were given no other warning; the Weasleys went first, then Harry was coaxed forward by Hermione, who went in after him.

Jake sighed. “Well, here goes nothing. Abyss beyond the brick walls, here I come.”

“Mood,” Danny sighed, watching as Jake let loose a scream while barreling towards the wall, promptly disappearing through it like the rest had done.

He only hesitated a moment before following close behind.

There was a sensation of falling; darkness pressed around him until suddenly he found himself stumbling out the other side of the wall, into a mirror image of King’s Cross - but this one was filled with witches and wizards, their carts holding owls, adults with their wands out as they levitated their trunks above the crowd. The swish of robes resounded throughout the room, though not as loud as the voices chattering on about the new school year.

Molly quickly gathered them together in front of the large, red train parked at the rails, the words HOGWARTS EXPRESS printed on the front and sides in large, bold letters. “Quickly, now!” she
called. “Have everything? Where’s Ron - ah, yes, dear, do you have your broomstick - Harry, dear, remember to stay out of trouble, and Hermione, I trust you to keep an eye on them… oh, Padfoot, come on, stay close!” She let out a breath, turning to Danny and Jake. “You two - have a wonderful year! I know you’re still adjusting, but Hogwarts really is wonderful-“

“Write to us!” Arthur added with a big grin.

“Course, dawg,” Jake said cheerfully, raising his hand for a fist bump.

“Now, kids,” Molly reminded them, “Alastor asked me to tell you not to write to the Order during the year. Everything must stay secretive. Remember, Professors McGonagall and Snape are there for you to talk to.”

“Right, like we’ll talk to Snape,” Ron muttered under his breath.

Still overwhelmed at all the people around, Danny let himself be pulled up on the train behind Jake. He saw other kids leaning out of the windows to wave to tearful parents, all with bright, excited smiles on their faces. The air was thick with joy at the prospect of leaving for the magical school.

They quickly scampered through the tight hallways of the train (and really, if Danny said he didn’t use a little intangibility to make moving around easier, he’d be lying to himself) and found a relatively empty compartment, save for two other people, one of which looked oddly familiar.

“Er, Harry,” Hermione started from behind them.

“Yes?” Harry asked.

Danny noticed the guilty looks on Ron and Hermione’s faces. Waving at Jake, he moved into the compartment, not wanting to be a part of any drama that would occur.

Evidently, Jake had the same idea. He whispered, “Three… two… one…”

“Fine,” Harry said with barely concealed sorrow. “That’s fine. I get it. You two go to, er, wherever it is Prefects go.”

“We’ll be back soon, Harry,” Hermione promised.

“Yeah,” Ron assured him, patting his friend on the shoulder as they turned around to leave.

Ginny was already sitting in the compartment, chatting with one of the people in the room - a small girl with silvery blond hair and a far-away look in her eyes. She held a magazine upside down as she nodded along to whatever the youngest Weasley was saying.

Danny took a seat next to a boy around his age, smiling briefly at him before being hit with a wave of recognition.

“Danny, right?” the kid said with a shy grin.

“Yeah,” Danny replied.

His thoughts must’ve shown on his face, because the boy introduced himself as Neville again. Neville Longbottom, apparently. Danny nodded at him, immensely glad that he didn’t have to ask his name when they’d met only yesterday.

Jake plopped down on Danny’s lap, only to grumble, “Fuck, you’re cold,” and slide off into the
seat next to him. He looked up at the two new people in the room and waved. “Yo.”

“Danny, Jake, Harry, this is Luna Lovegood,” Ginny said, gesturing to the blond girl, who had her eyes fixed on Jake.

“You feel funny,” Luna told him dreamily, sticking her nose back into her book.

“Uh…” Jake looked down at himself as if to search for a spot. “Okay?”

“And this is Neville.” Harry nodded at the boy sitting next to Danny.

“Yeah, we met at Diagon Alley,” Danny said. “How’s your toad, by the way?”

“Oh, he’s doing splendidly!” Neville smiled brightly. “Are you two going to be in fifth year?”

“We aren’t in any years,” Jake answered. “Danny and I are, uh, free range. We’ll be sitting in some classes and not in others.”

Neville cocked his head. “Oh. Is that how transfers work? Seems a little odd…”

Danny shook his head. “We’re not transfer students, actually. We, uh…” he sneaked a glance at Jake, who snorted at him.

“Don’t look at me,” the dragon snarked. “I don’t care what you tell ‘im, I’m not in charge or anything.”

“You’re the expert in the magical world, though,” Danny protested.

To his surprise, Jake actually let out a laugh. “Oh! Oh, man, that’s rich. Please tell my gramps that, holy shit. Nah, dude, I’m definitely not an expert. I know the basics and a little more than that, but I’ve still got a while. I’m only on my second year of training.” He slapped his knee. “Expert! Casper, I’m flattered!”

Danny grumbled out a half-hearted complaint, cuffing his friend over the back of the head.

Neville frowned, looking to Harry for support, who simply shrugged. Ginny gave them a small grin, and Luna continued to be immersed in her book. “Am I missing something here?” Neville asked.

Jake was still in stitches, so Danny answered for him. “Probably. It’s a long story. Basically, neither of us are wizards - Jake’s a dragon, and I’m, uh… I’m half-ghost. We were picked by Dumbledore-”

“You don’t look like a dragon,” Luna interrupted softly.

Jake, finally over his snickering, shot her a grin. “Oh, I’m a dragon. You might know me as a Draco, though, and I’m technically a shape-shifter.”

Here we go with the long-ass explanations, Danny thought as he watched Neville’s face fall into more confusion.

Jake took the time to demonstrate his powers; just a simply shifting of his hand, flames dancing over his skin for a moment as he allowed his dragon form to rise to the surface. After some time, he eventually managed to get Danny to change into Phantom, but switched back almost immediately once he realized how cold it would be in a room as small as the one they were in.
They didn’t share many specifics; everything would be explained to the students at the beginning of term, anyway, so Danny didn’t waste his breath. Besides, he liked giving the wizards anticipation. By the time the train had started moving and King’s Cross was but a speck in the horizon, Neville and Luna had been caught up on the existence of muggle ghosts and the ancient Draco race.

The topic switched to what was done over the summer, thought Harry didn’t seem particularly excited to share much about it. He and Neville seemed to know each other well, though, comfortable in each other’s presence as they talked about homework and the teachers at school. Danny found himself in a conversation with Jake and Ginny about Amity Park, both of whom wanted to know more about the strange place in Illinois where magic seemingly didn’t exist. (“Hermione told me about a book she read on magical cancellation,” Ginny said. “There are only a few spells that can actually diminish one’s magic, but it’s impossible to stop it completely. So ectoplasm is quite a foreign and, to be honest, slightly terrifying idea. You could drain all our magical energy just by extending a ghostly aura.”) Luna, too, joined in eventually, fascinated by the prospect of the Ghost Zone and all the adventures Danny had.

“You catch ghosts with what?” Ginny exclaimed incredulously.

“A thermos,” Danny replied, decidedly ignoring Jake’s snickering beside him. Harry looked equal parts flabbergasted, and poor Neville looked just plain confused, while Luna continued to stare in fascination. It was rather odd explaining his ghost hunting process to people who he’d already lived with for a week, but for some reason, the subject had never come up; sure, the Order had definitely been interested in what he could do and how he planned on keeping them in contact with the ghost zone, but the more technical tidbits, like who his enemies were and how he fought them, were only just touched upon. And the other kids didn’t even know the full extent of his powers yet, either. Not even Jake knew about his Wail. “Yeah, it’s kind of what you’d expect from my parents,” he continued, rubbing the back of his neck sheepishly. “They went through this phase where everything had to be disguised as ‘everyday items.’ It gets annoying when guns disguised as soda cans still pop up. Now, all their stuff just looks like something out of a sci-fi movie.”

They didn’t know what a sci-fi movie was, either (save for Harry).

Actually, now that Danny thought about it, that may have been the most mind-boggling thing he’d come across ever since learning about the wizarding world a few months back. Even though moving paintings and flying broomsticks and love potions were absolutely insane, they all fell under the category of magic. But this… this total apathy towards learning about the muggle world, which was, last time Danny had checked, the majority of civilization, happened for no reason other than “we don’t really care about staying in touch with anything non-magical.”

And it blew his mind, considering they lived in muggle communities. Hell, even some of the kids didn’t always get a normal education before being whisked off to Hogwarts.

You'd think... you'd think they'd at least know how a cell phone worked. Or what jeopardy was. Kahoot. Bill Nye.

"You guys don't have math at Hogwarts?" Danny had spluttered at one point in the evening while sitting in Ron and Harry's room, discussing the Hogwarts experience together while Jake dealt with some more Council stuff downstairs. "Or English Lit? Not even gym class?"

"Dunno what to tell you, mate." Ron shrugged.

"Arithmetic is an elective," Hermione chimed in. "And Charms class could be considered a branch of English since we study the prefixes and roots of different spells."
"No! No, it's not a branch of English! It's in Latin! And you can make stuff float!"

"So can you," Harry pointed out.

Danny waved his hand dismissively. "Yeah, but we don't have a class on that."

"We have flying class," Ron supplied. "Would that be gym class?"

"Not if you don't have to do the Pacer."

Hermione cocked her head to the side. "What's the Pacer? Is it an American thing, or something that you do later on in muggle schools?"

"You run until you die," Danny had replied flatly. He let out a breath he didn’t need, leaning back in the bed. “Ancients. I can’t believe you guys. I have to study geometry all year.”

Ron, though he didn’t understand the exact subject of geometry, let out a laugh. “Sucks to be you, mate.”

“Honestly, Ron, try to hold a little more sympathy,” Hermione chastised. To Danny, she said, “We understand the circumstances aren’t exactly ideal. You’ll be away from home for an entire year! We’re glad you decided to come, though.”

Danny had smiled at her, hoping it didn’t come out as a grimace. It was nice of her to say that, really, but the realization that Amity Park would be alone for so long hit him with the force of a bus. Sure, he’d spent many nights thinking about all the possible outcomes of him not being there to protect it; ghosts running rampart, Sam and Tucker failing in class because he wasn’t there to take care of things himself, Vlad inevitably figuring out he was gone and trying to cause trouble… there were plenty of setbacks to the situation.

Danny trusted Clockwork. He knew that the old ghost couldn’t interfere too much with time, and he was also aware of the hold the Observants had on him, but surely Clockwork wouldn’t let everything go down in flames too quickly, right? Even if he hadn’t heard from him in a while.

Sam and Tucker were keeping him updated on what was going on back in Amity, and things seemed to be going smoothly for the most part. He’d demanded a picture of the newspaper every now and again to make sure they weren’t glossing over things to keep him from dropping everything and coming home again; to his delight, the most noteworthy thing to happen was Danielle and the Red Huntress seen teaming up together, an unusual instance to humans but something that Danny had anticipated for a while.

So, yes, he’d thought of Amity Park before; but maybe it was the fact that he hadn’t realized just how long a year was, away from home and his family and that fact that his phone was dying, even with a longer battery life, and soon he’d have to find some way to charge it up again if he didn’t want to lose contact with his family. Oh, and his parents would be due for a phone call any day now, too. He’d have to come up with a convincing story to tell them that would ensure they wouldn’t worry about him being on the “totally real and incredibly inexpensive year-long NASA internship that doesn’t pay but makes a great learning experience - by the way, you won’t find it anywhere online because Tucker made it up, but it’s not like we’d ever tell you that since you wouldn’t believe the truth.”

But, hey, if things went South, he could always get a plane ticket from the money Sam had given him to get back to Amity. Or even ask Jake to carry him back. Danny was sure the dragon was just as anxious to get this mission over with.
Point being: wizards were weird. And now, having to explain what a soup thermos was to Neville only reinforced that idea.

It was maybe three hours later, when Danny became tired of the conversations and entertained himself with watching the countryside fly past through the window, that Hermione and Ron returned. Room was made for them as they made to sit down, and introductions began all over again. The atmosphere became awkward for a second as Hermione made a rather insensitive comment on *The Quibbler* - the magazine Luna was reading, which her father apparently was the editor for - but normalcy returned quickly enough as Luna waved her off, saying it was fine.

“Guess who else was made a Prefect,” Ron announced after he’d settled down.

“Not anyone good, I presume,” Harry commented dryly.

“*Malfroy,*” Ron moaned dramatically. “Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson.”

Neville grimaced, and Jake, ever the curious one, piped up to say, “Wow, okay, ‘Draco Malfoy’ sounds posh and snobby and kind of funny considering the circumstances, and now I’m demanding an explanation.”

Harry laughed at the remark and dove into a long-winded conversation on who exactly Draco Malfoy was and why he was such a “bloody git and a pain in the arse,” according to Ron. Hermione rolled her eyes but didn’t disagree. By the end of it, Jake was squinting angrily at his lap, muttering, “Should’ve left him as a ferret.”

The trolley cart for sweets came by, and Harry treated everyone to a couple candies; Jake amused himself with the chocolate frogs, dangling the moving candy over Danny’s face and cackling. “America *blows,* y’all,” he laughed as the ghost leaned back (it reminded Danny too much of many Thanksgivings gone wrong). “We got Jolly Ranchers and guns. Meanwhile Europe is over here with their Kinder Surprise Eggs and *moving* Chocolate Frogs.”

They spent a little longer in more of a comfortable silence, save for the “Golden Trio” (dubbed by the school - Harry, Ron, and Hermione were pretty famous, it seemed), who caught up on the last few hours.

Jake talked to Danny about the ghosts at the school and when he planned to give lessons to the students on them. “I’m not really sure?” Danny ran a hand through his dark hair. “We’ll need to find a time when a large number of students will be able to be there, like the weekend, or we’ll have to ask a teacher if we can do it during a class.”

“What about Defense Against the Dark Arts?” Hermione suggested. “Or, even better, Care of Magical Creatures. I’m sure Hagrid would be happy to let you teach a class.”

The halfa nodded. “That sounds good.”

By this time the sun had begun to set and the lights of the city were nonexistent as the train continued to trek out into the mountains, Jake had fallen asleep on Danny’s shoulder (the two had stayed up late experimenting with the candy from the joke shop, and poor Jake, who had eaten the majority, ended up awake much later than Danny), who continued to stare out the window with nervous anticipation. His eyelids grew heavier with each passing second, but the ghost just couldn’t fall asleep with the knowledge of what was ahead. After today, there was no going back; he’d be kept in Hogwarts for the remainder of the year to fulfill his duty to Clockwork, keeping the students safe and stopping what could be the most violent war in wizarding history.
The Order of the Phoenix knew the dangers, they knew what they’d have to face, and damn, were they protective. Danny remembered the first meeting he and Jake had gone to and how all the adults had argued for a good ten minutes on whether they should really allow them into the organization, being kids and all.

He’d introduced himself as Danny Phantom and demonstrated some of his powers, including his invisibility, intangibility, flight, and ecto-rays. He preferred to keep the rest of it hidden for now; there was no telling when this whole operation could go south. Jake seemed to have a similar idea, refusing to change into his dragon form and waving it off as simply not having enough space when Danny knew full well that he wasn’t that large.

If something went so wrong that they’d have to flee the wizarding world, it would be best to keep hidden as much as possible, from their strengths to their weaknesses.

Though, in the long run, there was really only one man Danny was the most worried about; Moody’s eye seemed to be able to follow him even when he used his invisibility, making Danny wonder just how far his ability to stop magical energy reached out. Maybe it was a thermal reader?

Even so. The idea of someone being able to see him while invisible, even if it was just intuition or a thermal reading and not actual sight, made him deeply uncomfortable and worried about pissing these people off.

(Well, any more than usual. Danny was well aware of him and Jake’s equal knack for getting into all sorts of trouble with authority figures. Their conversations about what to do at Hogwarts if boredom decided to strike was evidence enough.)

Danny was pulled out of his thoughts by the compartment door opening rather loudly. A few sets of voices, equal parts annoyed and tired, reached his ears. He turned his head and accidentally shrugged Jake off his shoulders, waking the boy in the process.


The boy standing in the doorway of the apartment reminded Danny of the white licorice his father had brought home one day: stringy, pale, and most definitely gross. His platinum-blond hair was pulled back from his head, his long, pointed nose turned upwards as he looked inside the compartment with cold, gray eyes. He wore long, black robes, a snake’s crest on his chest and a Prefect’s badge underneath. Behind him stood two stocky boys with facial expressions that suggested they had no real idea of what they were doing there but would endure it for Probably Snob’s sake.

“Malfoy,” Ron snarled. “What the bloody hell are you doing here?”

Definitely Snob.

Draco Malfoy sneered at Ron. “Don’t think you and I are equals just because you have a fancy badge like me, Weasley. Same to you, Granger-” his eyes flitted to Harry. “-and Potty, you must feel absolutely awful. The Boy-Who-Lived can’t even be a Prefect! What’d you do to screw that up?”

Harry looked just about ready to pounce, with Ginny laying a hand on Luna’s arm, and Neville tensed up and staring at his shoes. A burst of anger flew through Danny; he was reminded to the gibes Dash used to throw at him before his abuse had become physical, remembered the look in the jock’s eyes as he took pleasure in picking on those weaker than him.
This was a bully, and if there was one thing Danny hated, it was bullies.

To his surprise, however, before he could say anything (read: shoot an ectoblast), Jake barked a mirthless laugh.

“Potty? Weasel?” Jake shook his head. “You can’t come up with something more clever than that? Honestly, you bullies are losing your touch. No creativity.”

Draco’s eyes flashed dangerously. “And who are you supposed to be?”

To Danny’s utter confusion, Jake actually stood up from his seat, walked over to the door, and held out a hand. “Jake Long,” he said, flashing his fangs. “And you’re Draco Malfoy. I’ve heard loads about you.”

Oh, he’s dead meat, was Danny’s only thought. He wasn’t quite sure if it would be Jake or Draco.

The blond wizard guffawed, taking his hand and shaking it quickly before snapping it back to his side. “Well, Long, my family is quite well-known - tell me, why is it you’re hanging out with the mudblood and freaks? You seem well educated, are you a pureblood?”

“Okay,” Jake said slowly, “I don’t know what a mudblood is, but seeing as how you coupled it with the word freak, I don’t think it’s any good. Also, if by pureblood you mean me having two wizard parents, then no. My dad’s human.”

“Halfblood,” Draco said with an air of disdain. “Good enough, I suppose.”

“The little-” Ron began to rapidly swear under his breath, but no one made a move as they continued to watch Jake. Even Danny stayed where he was, immensely curious to see where this would lead.

“My mom’s not a wizard,” Jake continued, eyes glinting gleefully as Draco’s expression darkened.

“So you’re a mudblood too, then?” Draco’s lip curled.

Jake sighed dramatically. “Gee, no idea. Say, y’all, is that a wizard term?”

Hermione nodded, mouth a thin line. “Yes-”

“And it’s not good,” Harry growled, glaring intently at Draco.

“In that case,” Jake announced, tone dripping with false cheerfulness, “I am not. Since, y’know, I’m not a wizard.”

Danny wanted to laugh at Malfoy’s expression of total confusion.

“I am, however,” Jake continued, “fully capable of taking you on. I could kick your ass all the way back to whichever large mansion you and your selfish, rich, snobby family came from.”

Draco’s eyebrows shot up. “How dare you-”

“Unfortunately,” Jake said in a louder voice, talking over him, “I’m not allowed to attack any students, and have been asked to be a diplomat. Which is why I’m telling you, diplomatically, that if you ever bother us again, you’d better be ready for a smack down, Draco to Draco, in which I will win because I have fire breathing and know Kung-Fu, and you, sadly, just have a fancy stick and look like half an Oreo cookie.” He bowed deeply, stepping back. “Good day, Mr. Ferret.”
The room was filled with a stunned silence, broken as Draco, fuming, whirled around and took a step out the door. He looked back at Harry for a second and said in a cool voice, almost as an afterthought, “I hope you and your friends have fun dogging around this year, Potter.”

The door shut with a bang.

“Bloody hell,” Ron swore. “That was brilliant, Long.”

Jake waved his hand in the air dismissively. “I have my moments. Now, what did that word mean?”

“It’s an awful insult towards muggleborns,” Hermione muttered. “Means ‘dirty blood.’”

Jake let out an animalistic growl. “And I let him off that easy? Aw, hell no, c’mon, Danny, we’re going back to kick his butt-”

“It’s okay, Jake,” Hermione hastily reassured him.

“Yeah, mate.” Neville stared at him with wonder. “That was amazing.”

“Right,” Ginny agreed. Luna just smiled dreamily at him.

Harry glared at the door. “I should’ve punched him.”

Hermione looked aghast. “Harry, you don’t want to get in trouble before the year even starts!”

Danny sighed. “She’s right, dude. As rude as Draco was, I think Jake handled him nicely. Dude backed off and no one got hurt.”

Jake snorted. “Eh, the guy could’ve gone with a crooked nose.”

“I wouldn’t mess with him too much,” Hermione cautioned. “What you said to him was much appreciated, Jake, but Malfoy’s got powerful connections. If he takes what you said as a threat, you could get into serious trouble.”

Jake yawned. “Worth it. ‘Half an Oreo cookie’ was fuckin’ genius.”

“I was thinking of white licorice,” Danny said with a slight smile.

“Dude, that’s a thing? Isn’t black licorice bad enough?”

“Harry, mate?” Ron said to Harry quietly, just loud enough for Danny’s ears to pick up. “Everything alright? It’s just Malfoy, you know-”

“‘Dogging around,’” Harry murmured. “You don’t think he knows about…”

Hermione’s expression shifted into one of alarm. “He couldn’t. No one knows about… Padfoot. No one who hasn’t been to Grimmauld Place.”

Danny bit his lip. If someone as powerful as the Malfoys got ahold of sensitive information like that, things could get… bad. Draco looked greasy enough to blab to the wrong people, and if enough information got around, then him and Jake could potentially be found out by the dark side. Their roles were supposed to be kept mostly secret from those outside of the Order, at least until they were in Hogwarts. After that, letters containing information about them would be intercepted so as no one outside of the school knew too much about them. Even during the year, they wouldn’t be showing off too much so as not to create too much of an interest. After all, school holidays were
a thing.

He thought back to Clockwork’s promise of protection. The Ghost Zone would always be a safe haven for him to go back to, but what about Jake? There weren’t many Dracos in the world, at least, not as many as there were wizards. Even if they held power over most of the magical kingdom, rebellions could easily break out. And Voldemort was a prime example of someone who’d like to get their hands on several powerful, ancient shape-shifters.

Then he remembered the fire in his friend’s eyes, the strength with which he fought and the passion with which he spoke, and nearly laughed at the thought of some overconfident guy with a stick trying to bring Jake down.

*Let them try,* Danny thought, focusing on the icy touch of his powers, the ectoplasm flowing through his veins. *Let them try to take us down, to hurt the people around us. They have no idea what they’re in for.*

It would take more than a few magic spells to take down a halfa and a dragon.

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The Hogwarts Express stopped sometime around nine at night, when the sky had long since disappeared and the moon shone brightly in the clear night sky. Jake could see the lights of the castle up ahead as they stepped off the train amidst all the other students, from terrified first years to older, more comfortable teenagers. He held onto Danny’s hand tightly so as not to get lost in the crowd.

Everyone had changed into their robes not too long before they’d stepped off the train, leaving Jake and Danny feeling severely underdressed in their casual jeans and t-shirts. The air was cool, and coupled with Danny’s unnaturally cold skin, Jake could hardly suppress the light shivers that racked his body. His chi expanded in his chest, tendrils of warmth making their way throughout his body in an effort to keep a high temperature.

Jake could hear the voice of whoever was leading the first years somewhere up ahead, but he never got a chance to make his way over there as Danny pulled him along after Harry and the others. Evidently he wanted to go in the same way as the students; not that Jake minded either way, seeing as how they’d be dining together anyway.

The dragon yawned. It’d been a long couple of days; after all of the research, teaching himself of wizard lore and their laws, sending reports to the Dragon Council, not to mention his attempts at being *diplomatic* and *making friends* and trying his hardest to look past years of racism and violence against other magicals… it was, in short, incredibly draining. He couldn’t even begin to understand how Danny was feeling; whereas Jake had years of preparation, Danny only had a few months, most of which were spent in a place far off magical radar.

Well, they had all year now. Best to start as soon as possible, right?

Jake yawned again as he stumbled out into a clearing after Danny, registering a moment later the line of students climbing into carriages. He squinted against the wind peppering his face, almost missing Harry’s comment about the creatures pulling the carriages.

“What are you talking about, Harry?” Hermione asked. “There’s nothing there. The carriages are being pulled by magic, just as they’ve always been.”

“You can’t see them?” Harry asked incredulously. “They’re - but I - look, they’re *massive* !”

“’Mione’s right, mate, nothing’s there,” Ron chimed in. “Are you feeling alright?”
“They’re big,” Danny muttered next to Jake. “Like skeletal horses.”

Jake whipped his head around to stare at the half ghost. “Woah, you can see them?” As far as he could tell, the only thing pulling the carriages was empty air.

Danny nodded, eyes glinting eerily in the dim light.

They eventually snagged a carriage and fit everyone onto it; albeit a bit cramped. Jake, sandwiched between Ginny and Neville, peered at the empty space in front of the carriage, squinting as if that would allow him to see whatever was there. And there did seem to be a magical presence, he realized now, reaching out with his chi… but it could simply be mistaken for a spell or whatever it was that held the carriages upright.

“It’s okay,” Luna piped up in her usual soft voice, “you’re not mad. I can see them, too.”

“You can?” Harry’s voice dripped with surprise.

Luna nodded. “I’ve been able to see them since my first year.”

“I don’t like them,” Danny muttered, eyes fixed on a point in front of the carriage. “They feel like death.”

Jake immediately pulled his chi back into his body, suddenly very glad he couldn’t see the creatures.

The ride to the castle was decidedly much more comfortable when they didn’t have to carry their luggage and walk there on their own; and though he and Danny carried their own bags, seeing as how they’d have to be dropped off in the Room of Requirement, somewhere house elves couldn’t always get to, Jake couldn’t help but feel a twinge of gratefulness towards the little guys for doing so much on their own.

Soon enough, they’d arrived at the castle and were brought through the doors inside. Jake took a moment to admire the lights from inside, the chatter of students as they entered the building, the way the clear night sky showed stars sparkling like billions of tiny diamonds. He could hear Danny humming next to him, and knew the space nerd was probably craning his neck up to stare at the constellations up above.

Then they cleared the threshold and found themselves surrounded by cool gray stone, the flickering oil lamps the only thing lighting their way.

The walk into the Great Hall blurred by in a mess of colors and laughter and magic swimming in the air. Jake took a deep breath and tried to get used to the energy buzzing in the air, his chi curling around in his chest as it tried to make sense of the amount of magic making its way around him. He’d never been around so many people with magic at once; not even the Magus Bazaar housed so many different of his kind at once. But here, hundreds of wizards would surround him constantly (or, at least, for the year he’d be staying). It felt almost surreal.

“I hate that people are staring,” Danny murmured into Jake’s ear as they followed the Golden Trio to the Gryffindor table. “What, have they never seen someone not wearing those god-awful robes?”

Jake snorted. “Half these people here don’t know what a cell phone is. I wouldn’t put it past them.”

Danny was right, though; the looks they were getting from passerby, whispers thrown their way, was enough to make anxiety bubble up inside Jake’s stomach. He set a glare on his face, jutting his jaw out, hoping it’d discourage any confrontation.
Ginny made room for them at the table as they approached, and Jake noticed Luna separating herself from the crowd towards the Ravenclaw table. Danny shoved him to the side as he prepared to sit down, laughing at Jake’s mock outraged expression.

“Ah, forget you,” Jake declared, plopping down next to his friend, taking his bag off his shoulder and stuffing it underneath his portion of the bench. He looked around the table and grinned at the people looking at him, well aware that it probably looked forced and more than a little unsettling given his fangs. Next to him, Danny cleared his throat and looked down at his empty plate.

“Goddammit,” Danny swore softly. “Where’s a Master’s table when you need one?”

Jake began to laugh, running a hand through his green-dipped hair. “Sons of bitches didn’t even give us pillows to sit on!”

Danny waved a gold-plated fork in the air. “Atrocious!”

Before they could grab any more of the wizards’ attention, a hush fell over the room as Minerva McGonagall called for silence. Jake and Danny turned around with the rest of the house to face the entrance to the Great Hall, where an old wizard’s hat was being placed on a stool.

“What’s with the hat?” Jake asked in confusion. Hermione opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off as the hat began to sing.

A slit opened in the middle of the… pointy bit, forming a sort of mouth, allowing for a melody to flow out in what was a surprisingly nice voice. The hat sang of a number of things; while Jake was mesmerized by the movements of the magical fabric, he was able to catch some verses about banding together in what could become a hard time for magickind, to find friends where one would previously never look, to heed the warnings in the air. By the end of the song, a heavy sort of discomfort hung in the air.

The Great Hall immediately broke up into whispers by the end of the song, the “mouth” sealing shut again, and Jake forced himself to pay attention to the conversations around him.

“What the bloody hell was that?” Ron hissed.

“A warning,” Hermione muttered, sending Harry a look of concern, who was staring intently at his plate, brows furrowed in worry.

Jake met Danny’s gaze. The halfa bit his lip, shrugging. “We were brought here to keep everyone safe,” Danny said in a low voice so as not to attract the attention of the students. “Maybe the hat knows what kind of dangers we’d be facing, and decided a warning was a good idea.”

Jake pinched the bridge of his nose. “It’s a hat. A magic hat, but still. If a hat knows something, then this year might be more stressful than we first thought.”

Danny looked like he wanted to say something else, but never got the change to; the room was once again brought to silence as one of the staff hushed everyone once again.

“What’s happening now?” Jake wondered out loud.

Hermione gave him a look of surprise. “Have you not been informed about this? It’s the Sorting Ceremony. First years get their houses picked for them.”

“Ah.” Jake nodded, remembering a conversation with Minerva from when he and Danny had stayed at the castle. “Yeah, someone might’ve mentioned it.”
“I still don’t get the houses,” Danny sighed. “Why separate everyone?”

“Quiet,” Ron whispered. “It’s starting.”

“Stevenson, Sierra,” McGonagall read from a large scroll.

From a group of first years, which Jake hadn’t noticed walk in, a small girl shuffled forward, nervousness written across her face. She took a seat upon the stool and allowed Minerva to place the Sorting Hat over her head, the large thing draping over her eyes. There were a few moments of tense silence, until suddenly, a slit opened in the hat’s fabric again and it announced in a booming voice, “RAVENCLAW!”

The girl, Sierra, let out a palpable sigh of relief and hurried over to the table currently cheering and clapping for her. Jake cocked and eyebrow. “How does the hat sort?”

“It looks into your head,” Neville answered. “Sorts through your best qualities, your past experiences, and puts you in the house you’d be best fit for. Ravenclaw for the wise, Gryffindor for the brave, Slytherin for the cunning, and Hufflepuff for the just.”

“Slytherin for the gits, you mean,” Ron muttered.

Danny’s face whitened. “It looks into your head? Your memories?”

“Everything the Hat sees is confidential,” Hermione quickly assured him. “And I wouldn’t worry, anyway, since you aren’t getting Sorted.”

Danny flicked his eyes around the room, staring at the different banners. His hands clenched the edge of the table nervously. “I guess I just don’t really like the idea of some magical, sentient hat rifling through my memories.”

Jake punched his arm lightly. In an attempt to lighten the mood, he said, “It’s okay, dude, we won’t be getting Sorted! Hey, though, what house do ya think I’d get into? Ravenclaw, maybe? Think I’m wise?”

Danny’s lips twitched. “You? You’re reckless and don’t really think before you speak. I’d say Gryffindor.”

“He is really good at gathering information for the wizarding world, though,” Hermione piped in. “I wouldn’t say either houses are too far off.”

Harry shrugged. “Eh. You can be curious and still be Sorted into Gryffindor. I mean, Hermione, you’re really smart, but you weren’t put in Ravenclaw.”

“Alas, we may never know,” Jake sighed dramatically. “And you, Fenton? Where would we place you?” He leaned back to look at the other tables. “Slytherin, for the green?”

Danny laughed. “I don’t think colors have anything to do with it.”

“Besides,” Ron said flippantly, “you wouldn’t want to get into Slytherin. Blood purists and arrogant pricks, the whole lot of them.”

Hermione frowned. “I don’t think that’s really fair, Ron. Not everyone in Slytherin is evil.”

Ron looked like he wanted to argue, but Harry cut him off. “Pay attention to the Sorting, they’re almost done!”
He was right. Only a handful of students remained, the Sorting Hat continuing to yell out different houses over their hushed conversation. Jake watched as cheers erupted from whichever house gained a new member, Gryffindor greeting a fair number themselves. The Weasley twins, a few people down the row of benches, cheered the loudest, whooping and slamming their fists on the table excitedly.

Eventually the cheers died down as the last of the first years were Sorted, and Albus Dumbledore himself stood up from the front of the room in preparation for a speech. He spread his arms wide, a broad grin on his face. “Welcome back to another year at Hogwarts! And to the first years: We hope you immensely enjoy your experience here!”

Cheers around the room.

“I trust most of you know the rules already,” Albus said. “No magic in the hallways, especially dueling, no going into another house’s common room, and - though some of you seem to forget this - no going into the Forbidden Forest. It’s called Forbidden for a reason.”

The Trio shared a Look. Jake had to keep himself from loudly snorting.

“Well, I shan’t keep you waiting any longer,” Albus said cheerfully. “Enjoy the feast!”

Food appeared on their plates; gasps could be heard from the first years, and even Jake had to take a moment to appreciate the amount of food being served to them, despite the knowledge it came from the house elves, who he suspected were rarely ever thanked. Chicken, mashed potatoes, pastries, anything you could get your hands on - it sat right in front of them.

Stomach rumbling loudly, he dug in.

Danny and him joined in on some of the conversation around them, deflecting the questions on who they were and why they weren’t wearing robes; Jake suspected they’d be introduced later anyway, so who was he to take away from the suspense? Besides, he wasn’t really in the mood for an interrogation. Eventually, those around him dropped the topic, and he contented himself with laughing along to the jokes told and the stories shared. Miraculously, Harry’s past year didn’t come up, avoiding any conflict.

About an hour later and with full stomachs all around, the food disappeared and the headmaster prepared to continue his speech.

“I have some important announcements,” Albus boomed. “For one, as you may have noticed, Professor Hagrid is currently absent; until he returns, Care of Magical Creatures will be taught by Professor Grubbly-Plank. We also have a new Defense Against the Dark Arts Teacher, Professor Umbridge, who has come straight from the Ministry of Magic and graciously agreed to teach all you fabulous students!”

“That’s the woman from my hearing,” Harry said in surprise.

“I hope you all have a fantastic year,” Albus continued, “and make many wonderful memories! While I know last year was difficult for some people, I believe we can move forward and continue to prepare-“

“Hem, hem.”

The noise came from the staff table, a few chairs down from where Albus was standing; it took a few moments, but Jake was eventually able to pick out a stout woman, draped in awful shades of pink, standing up from her chair and looking expectantly at the headmaster.
“Professor Umbridge.”

“Did she-“ Ron sputtered, “Did she just interrupt him?”

Albus narrowed his eyes for a moment, but smoothed his expression over almost immediately. “Yes, well, as I was saying... We need to prepare for any possible-”

“Hem, hem.”

“Dude,” Jake muttered. “Again?”

Don’t get him wrong: Bumblebee wasn’t his favorite person in the world, but he certainly sympathized with him in this moment. Being cut off like that, twice, must’ve been infuriating.

Nevertheless, Albus sat down, nodding at the woman and allowing her to speak.

She gave the students a tight-lipped smile, something Jake assumed was meant to be warm and friendly but instead gave him an intense need to throw up.

That pink was fucking awful.

“I am so glad to be working here this year with all you wonderful children,” she began, her voice high and tinny and not at all what Jake had expected from someone who reminded him so much of a toad. “I’m sure we’ll all become such good friends!”

Judging from the expressions around him, no one was particularly excited to “become such good friends.”

To his right, Danny muttered, “Oh God no,” which summed up Jake’s thoughts pretty well.

The woman launched into a speech - if it was possible to launch into something so utterly boring that most of the Great Hall had resorted to chatting with one another after the first ten minutes. Jake himself got lost in the talking around him, tuning out her simpering voice as he listened to whatever it was the Weasley twins had to say (something about their joke shop, presumably, but the terms were so beyond him that he had little hope of understanding anything).

Danny, on the other hand, seemed to be trying his best to listen intently, as was Hermione. Though the witch did a better job at actually seeming interested, Jake could see with a few glances the ghost’s way that whatever it was the lady was saying worried him to some degree.

Inwardly, he shrugged. He could ask Danny about it later.

“And so,” Umbridge said at last, “I hope we all have a wonderful time together at Hogwarts! I’m immensely excited to begin teaching all you bright, wonderful children!”

Jesus, it sounds like she’s reading off a paper, Jake thought, glaring at her despite knowing there was no way she’d be able to see him.

The murmuring, which had died down a bit as students realized she was finally finished with her speech, picked up again as she sat herself back down with a self-satisfied smirk.

“What could it mean?” Hermione questioned out loud.

Ron looked at her in surprise. “You were actually listening? Harry?” He turned to his friend.

Harry shook his head. “I zoned out maybe five minutes in. Hey, when do you think they’ll be
introducing Danny and Jake?"

Hermione made a show of rolling her eyes back further than should’ve been humanly possible. “Honestly. You didn’t listen at all?”

Jake shrugged. Danny, on the other hand, chimed in with, “I didn’t really get all of it, but she spoke a bunch about the Ministry of Magic, and was really… condescending about it? Like, worryingly so?”

Hermione nodded enthusiastically. “She seemed very adamant about ‘adhering to the Ministry’s wishes.’ I think…” She bit her lip.

“What, Hermione?” Harry prompted.

Hermione sighed, meeting everyone’s eyes with a hard, level gaze. “It means the Ministry’s interfering at Hogwarts.”

A moment of silence, broken by Danny asking, “Couldn’t that be a good thing, though? I mean, judging by all the shit that went down last year, wouldn’t it be high time that you guys got some extra protection?”

Jake sighed. “Maybe. But honestly, when has direct government interference, at a school no less, ever only been a good thing?”

They didn’t have time to sit on that statement, as Dumbledore chose that moment to grab the students’ attention again. He clinked his fork against his goblet, waiting as shushes washed across the room, until everyone’s attention fell on the headmaster again.

“Thank you, Dolores, for that enlightening speech,” Albus said to Umbridge, and only a few people would recognize the underlying tone of irritation. As the toad-woman sat back down, he fixed his gaze on the Gryffindor table, and Jake swore he met both his and Danny’s eyes respectively. “Before we go off to bed, as I know it’s been a long day, I have one more exciting announcement to make. I’m sure some of you we have two new young gentlemen with us today, currently sitting at the Gryffindor table.”

Students from around the Great Hall craned their necks towards said table to try and catch a glimpse of Jake and Danny. The dragon stubbornly ignored the stares of those who found them. Beside him, Danny fixed his gaze on the front, where Dumbledore continued to speak.

“I have asked some powerful allies for assistance this year,” the headmaster said. “One of them you may know, while the other keeps mostly to themselves. “Jake Long and Danny Fenton are both representatives of such allies, and have been placed here this year to help scout out any dangers, teach you of their worlds, and give us a plan to fall back on should Hogwarts fail to stay the safe haven it is supposed to be.”

A ripple of alarm coursed through the student body.

“I will not lie to you.” Albus fixed the room with a deadly stare. “We are going through hard times. I know there is much controversy on what happened last year at the Triwizard Tournament, and I would appreciate it if students did not lash out at one another for personal opinions. The Ministry of Magic has agreed to allow us these representatives as long as they, too, can dispatch one of their own, and I know we can and will live together in harmony.”

“Dude, check out Umbridge,” Danny murmured into Jake’s ear.
The dragon flicked his eyes towards the woman sitting at the staff table and tried his hardest to contain a snort. The professor’s entire demeanor screamed *discomfort*, from her clenched fists to her steadily reddening face. It was clear that whatever arrangement Albus had come up with, she had not been happy with it.

“Jake is part of an ancient race called the Dracos,” Albus continued. “While he and his kind call themselves dragons, we, as wizards, have given feral dragons that title, and see him as more of a shapeshifter. He has the ability to assume both a human and dragon form, drawing energy from his *chi*, where his magic resides, much like the much more spread out magical core wizards have pulsing in their bodies.

“The Dracos have been around for thousands of years, the most powerful magical force to exist and, up until now, have left us to our own devices, since we’ve been registered as Independent for some time now. If you’re not sure what that means, I’m sure a quick trip to the library could help.”  
Albus gave the silent students some time to process, and after a quick nod, said, “Jake is here to collect information on our status and firepower, and will grant his own help in fighting back against whatever may threaten us. He reports whatever he deems important back to the Dragon Council, but do not let that stop you from becoming friends. He is here as a diplomat, first and foremost, and is required to learn as much about our culture as he can.”

*Was that an attack?* Jake wondered. *It sounded like an attack.*

“Danny Fenton is the representative of the world beyond the Veil,” Albus said after a beat. “Dubbed by his town as the ‘Ghost Zone,’ he belongs to a group of corporeal, muggle ghosts that are much more powerful than the ghosts we have here and could serve as great allies. A good friend of mine, Clockwork, Master of Time, has agreed to let his apprentice stay with us. Danny isn’t completely a ghost; rather, he is a sort of hybrid, one who walks the line between life and death, with both the powers of any muggle ghost but also the form of a human body. He is here to assure safe passage into the Ghost Zone, if the need may arise, and to offer knowledge of his kind.

“I believe we are severely unknowledgeable when it come to our ghosts,” Albus said, voice rising slightly, “and could benefit from someone like Danny to teach us all which we do not know. Being infused with ectoplasm, he has power our magic cannot touch, and therefore has not interacted with the wizarding world much, either, so it would be much appreciated if some of you chose to help him learn about our culture, as well.

“Both Jake and Danny are here as friends, as allies. I believe we could all benefit from some of those in trying times such as these. Both will be sitting in some classes throughout the day, as well as roaming the halls, so if you ever need them, just ask around, and I’m sure you’ll find them eventually.” The corners of his blue, blue eyes crinkled as he smiled. “Now, I know it’s late! I believe you all have classes to attend tomorrow. Professor McGonagall should’ve handed out your timetables already. Please enjoy the rest of the evening, but do not leave your common rooms, as curfew has been set. Get some rest and have fun this school year!”

The headmaster sat down, and chaos erupted in the Great Hall.

Jake and Danny were bombarded with questions from every side, so many sentences jumbled together at such high volumes that it send sharp spikes of pain through Jake’s head, enhanced senses being taken over by his chi and drawn away in an effort to protect him. He felt Danny tap his shoulder and looked up to see the halfa clutching his head, blinking rapidly, mouthing, *Let’s go.*

Didn’t have to tell him twice.

Jake grabbed onto Danny’s sleeve as he slipped intangibly through the crowd, causing even more
of an uproar. Intangibility felt strange enough when being *made* so, and no doubt the students could feel the two passing through them as they made their way out of the Great Hall amidst the others trying to get to their dorms (or, in the Gryffindors’ cases, just trying to get ahold of the two representatives).

Ghost powers were a damn useful thing, though.

Pretty soon they’d made it out of the thickest parts of the crowd, and Danny managed to find them a corridor to duck into so that he could change into Phantom unbothered. “It’s easier for me to carry you in ghost form, since I have more access to all my strength, and everything’s somehow lighter when I touch it as a ghost, too,” Danny explained.

“*Woah,* wait, what do you mean, *carry me*?” Jake backed up against the wall, holding his hands out in front of him, trying to ignore the cold seeping into his bones from Danny’s aura.

Phantom rolled his toxic green eyes, sighing in an exaggerated way despite Jake *knowing* the little shit had no need to. “Do you want to get to our room without getting mobbed or no?”

Jake narrowed his eyes at him. “Make it quick. You’re *really* cold.”

Phantom gave him a lopsided grin. “I’m a ghost. Being cold kinda comes with the package.”

Jake didn’t have time for a retort before the ghost had swooped in on him, grabbed him from under the arms, and shot straight up into the ceiling. The dragon’s loud swearing would follow the students as they walked up the stairs while Danny simply flew up invisibly through all solid objects.

“Live a little, Jake!” Danny laughed as they reached the corridor before the Room of Requirement. “We’ve got all year to do whatever we want in this school!”

Jake lightly shoved the halfa away, an equally bright grin on his face. “Well, I don’t know about *living* on both our ends, realistically. But, hey, in a much more abstract sense—”

“Fuck you,” Danny snickered, changing back into his human form.

Jake threw a hand around Danny’s shoulders and guided them both up and down the hallway to open the door to their room. “We should get to bed soon. Long day of classes ahead.”

“Only after I kick your ass at a sparring match,” Danny declared, making his way through the door that had appeared.

“Oh, Casper, you are *so on.*”

Chapter End Notes

*happy thanksgiving to anyone who celebrates, by the way!*

god i can't wait to write the pranking scenes it's gonna get Wild
“Okay.” Jake dumped a pile of paper onto Danny’s bed, who was tapping intently at his phone screen. Taking a seat at the foot of the bed, the dragon announced, “Student schedules.”

Danny looked at the papers skeptically, setting his phone down on the small night stand next to him. “Could you maybe be a little more specific?”

Jake pulled his sleeves over his hands in the hopes it would get rid of the morning cold. “Minerva dropped off some extra schedules she had this morning, at least a few from each grade, so we could, like, look at them and decide on a game plan. Y’know, where to go, when, just so we have a better idea on how this school system works.”

Danny nodded, sitting up in his bed. His covers fell as he propped himself up to reveal a black pajama shirt with little green ghosts. He glared at Jake, who tried his hardest to contain his snickering.

“You wearing matching pants, Casper?” Jake taunted, leaning out of the way as Danny shot a half-hearted ectoblast his way.

Danny yawned and stretched his arms out in front of him. A slight pop came from his shoulder, and he winced. “Oh, dude, how hard did you hit me last night?”

“You mean when I wiped the sparring mat with your ghostly ass?” Jake commented, leafing through some of the schedules. “Didn’t think it would hurt that much.”

Danny grumbled out a noncommittal reply as he disentangled himself from the sheets of the bed and scooted closer to Jake. “What time is it?”

“You’re the one with the working phone,” Jake replied. His phone had ceased to work a few days after arriving at Grimmauld Place, and they still had no way of charging it, since the Room of Requirement seemed to refuse to give them any electrical appliances (the lack of a video game
system had really hit hard). “Though I’m pretty sure breakfast is happening right about now.”

“Shouldn’t we be there? To, y’know, be representatives?”

Jake scowled. “Yeah, I’m not really feeling it.” His back still ached from when Danny had flipped him last night (in dragon form! How the hell did he do that?), and the thought of going to meet a bunch of wizards this early in the day made him want to stick his head under a pillow and scream.

Danny took a few pieces of paper from the mattress and rubbed his eyes tiredly as he stared at them. “Alright, let’s get this over with. What are we thinking?”

Jake fished out a few fifth year schedules from the top of the pile and turned them over. “I say we start with the same year the Trio is in. We might get lucky and end up in a few of their classes, which I’d much rather do instead of following around a bunch of twelve-year-olds.”

“Agreed. Do you have any of their schedules?”

Jake blinked, then ran a hand through his hair sheepishly. “I, uh. No. No, I don’t. Oops.” It’d been pure luck that he’d been standing outside the Room of Requirement to watch students walk by that morning, so Minerva didn’t have to wait long to give them the schedules. Unfortunately, he hadn’t asked for any specific ones. Besides, she looked stressed, and he himself felt incredibly tired, not really in the mood for any conflict.

Danny gave him a small smile. “That may be a problem.”

Jake sighed. “Here, okay. Let’s just pick a random one-”

“Let’s pick a couple,” Danny interjected. “So it’s not just one class we follow around. And are we gonna do only fifth year today, or…?”

“We’ll pick a few, maybe three? We only have to attend three classes a day, and I’m assuming they have to be full. Let’s do different grades.”

Danny nodded, rifling through the schedules to pick out two other random schedules while Jake grabbed one for fifth-year. The dragon skimmed the contents, then suggested, “Can we do Defense Against the Dark Arts for fifth year? Ron and Harry talked about it constantly.”

“Wanna join them in their class?”

“Whatever. I don’t really care when, we’ve got all year, after all.”

Danny bit his lip. The temperature around the two dropped, and Jake shivered. “Yeah,” Danny said softly. “A whole year.”

They were silent for a moment. Jake stared at the other schedules, subconsciously grinding his teeth together. His chi rumbled in his chest. Sighing, he broke the silence by tapping Danny’s hand declaring, “We’re not doing anything first period. I say we grab something to eat, then it’s a fly around the lake. How ‘bout it?”

Danny looked up and into Jake’s eyes, giving him a tiny grin. “That’s sounds nice.”

“Hold on,” Jake called over his shoulder as he moved behind the curtain to his own bed, “I’m gonna get dressed into something else. You should too, Casper, unless you want everyone to see your ghost PJ’s.”
“Yeah, yeah,” Danny groaned. “Though my outfit doesn’t change in ghost form, by the way. Hey, are we gonna worry about anyone seeing us?”

"Eh. Why bother." Jake shrugged, throwing on a plain green t-shirt and dark shorts, glad he’d already combed his hair so he wouldn’t take any extra time. He joined Danny in the kitchen area and watched in amusement as the ghost expressed his disappointment at not yet having “real coffee.” Neither of them were in the mood for pop tarts that moment, so Jake suggested they run down to the Great Hall and try to snag some breakfast before it was all gone, and soon they were out the door.

“Nice shirt, by the way,” Jake commented before dropping down a flight of stairs, allowing wings to materialize out of his back to make his descent easier (though not before making sure he had enough room to do so; they didn’t need another repeated incident like their first day). “The Killers?”

Danny, who floated alongside him, looked down at the dark shirt. “Oh, yeah. I like the band.”

“I haven’t listened to many of their songs,” Jake said. “Spud’s usually the rock kinda guy. I’m more into-”

“Bad pop?” Danny suggested, floating several feet higher when Jake swatted at him.

So as not to feel any shorter than he already was, Jake stopped his attempts to land a blow and instead hurried down the hall, silently praying they wouldn’t run into any students. “C’mon, Casper, you wanna eat breakfast - and real coffee - or not?”

Danny rolled his eyes. “I would never skip breakfast. It’s the most important meal of the day. You cannot function without it. I can’t survive on decaf-”

“I literally can’t tell if you’re being sarcastic or not,” Jake said.

Grinning, Danny began to float faster towards the Great Hall. “I would never use sarcasm on you!”

“Because I deserve better?” Jake yelled, picking up the pace as he followed the ghost.

“You deserve all the love in the world, baby!” Danny laughed. “Except the last pastry!”

“You fuck-” Jake let out a loud whoop as he sprinted after his friend, not too keen on shifting to dragon form when students were still walking around the (unfortunately) still pretty tight hallway. Though, really, if he said he weren’t using magical energy to push his legs forward, faster than any normal human, he’d be lying.

Danny slowed down a bit as he neared the entrance to the Great Hall, and Jake saw his opportunity. He jumped and tackled the ghost midair, and the extra weight caused them both to come crashing down to the ground with shouts of surprise. A few students screamed and scrambled out of the way as the two wrestled on the ground - and at this point, Jake wasn’t quite sure if Danny really wanted to steal the last few pastries from him or if he just wanted to get the dragon back for beating him at last night’s sparring match.

Danny eventually landed a blow on Jake’s nose with his elbow and slipped out of Jake’s grip as the younger boy shouted in indignation, “Not the face!”

Laughing, the halfa stepped away as Jake tried to right himself. “Why didn’t you just use intangibility, you shit,” Jake groaned, massaging his nose.
“This was more fun,” Danny replied, “and anyway, I didn’t hit you hard enough to leave a mark. That was for last night, by the way.”

Letting out a breathy laugh, Jake took Danny’s outstretched hand. Once he was standing, he delivered a swift punch to Danny’s chest, ducking out of the way and leaping towards the nearest table to grab one of the last pastries on the plate. Turning around and meeting Danny’s mock glower, Jake said cheekily, “I win!”

Danny raised his eyes to the ceiling. “Dammit.” He looked around himself, prompting Jake to do the same and in turn notice the many pairs of eyes on the two of them. They’d landed nearest to the Hufflepuff table, their scuffle happening just as a group of girls had begun to leave the Great Hall.

“Merlin’s beard,” one of them breathed.

Jake gave her a blinding smile, waving with the hand that wasn’t currently holding the pastry. Behind him, Danny snorted. “Hey, I’m Jake!”

“I-” the Hufflepuff stared at his mouth, and Jake remembered his fangs. “I’m Franny.”

“Why were you fighting?” another student behind Franny blurted out.

Danny huffed a laugh, coming up from behind Jake to snag a pastry as well. “Because dragons are competitive and obsessed with food-”

“You’re the one who raced me!” Jake defended.

“I didn’t race you. You’re the one who tackled me.”

“It was implied.”

Danny jabbed a finger at Jake, giving Franny and the other student a pointed look. “See what I mean?”

“I still won!” Jake waved the pastry in the air. Satisfied with the eyeroll that followed, he moved to the bench and sat himself down, taking a bite out of the pastry and ignoring the stares from the other students.

Danny joined him, peering at the pastry. “Is this cherry?”

“Raspberry,” Jake answered in between bites.

“Curious,” Franny murmured.

Jake looked up from his breakfast. “What is?”

She flushed. “Oh, nothing, it’s just - well, I’m surprised you’re eating that, I guess.”

Jake cocked his head. “What do you mean?”

“Well, you’re a dragon,” she continued hesitantly. “And I guess I just expected you to be eating more… well, that you’d be more carnivorous.”

Irritation flickered in his chest. Here we go again, with the stereotypes and generalizations.

“Diplomat,” Danny coughed into his hand.
Jake sighed. Then again, it was probably unfair to condemn her for that. After all, students here had probably never been taught about any dragons other than feral ones. And, hey, the fangs might have been similar to predator teeth, too.

“Nah,” Jake told her, trying his best to keep a neutral facial expression. “Dragons - I mean, Dracos - we eat whatever. Can’t really live among humans if you don’t eat like ‘em, right?”

“You live among humans?” a different student asked from some ways away.

Jake quickly swallowed the bite he’d taken from his pastry. “What else would I use this killer bod for?”

Danny choked on his food. “Oh, God, you ruined it.”

“Exactly my intention, Casper!” Jake grinned. To the students, he said, “I wouldn’t wait up too much. Class should be starting soon. Hey, maybe you’ll see us!”

The Hufflepuffs nodded hesitantly, picking themselves up from their seats and making their way towards the doors of the Great Hall, which had begun to rapidly empty. A few other kids shot Jake and Danny curious glances, but after the clear dismissal, no one else came to ask any questions.

Danny patted Jake’s shoulder. “Nice going! No arguments!”

“I know, right?” Jake stuffed the rest of his pastry in his mouth. Through a full mouth, he said, “I’m totally diplomatic!”

Danny laughed. “Alright, alright. I’m gonna grab some coffee before all the food disappears, then we’ll get outside to fly around for a bit.”

Jake shot him a thumbs up.

It was maybe a few minutes before the first bell when Jake and Danny found themselves by the shores of the Black Lake, the sun still rising, bathing the sky in a golden light. A slight breeze peppered their faces, cool but not uncomfortable, and the dark water glinted before them. Remembering Filch’s warning about the giant squid, neither of them felt too keen on exploring the depths.

Jake gave Danny a mock bow. “After you.”

The halfa scoffed. “Oh, now I’m worthy of the Great Dragon’s respect?”

“Never mind,” Jake said, taking a few steps back before sprinting at the lake, jumping at the water line, and transforming in midair.

Shifting into his dragon form had always been freeing; he’d felt almost incomplete before his powers had kicked in, a few days after his thirteenth birthday, and though the first transformation had been painful - like, bones-splitting-apart-and-regrowing painful - after that, it finally felt like his skin fit around his body. Every time the life of a human became too much for him, he could escape into his chi, where scales and wings and a fiery breath would envelop him, bringing him hope and glory.

Jake breathed. Flames, straight from the magical energy in his chest, licked the surface of his skin and burned away the human shell, replacing it with his True Form, as Lao Shi called it. Now clad in crimson scales, he opened his wings and shot up higher into the sky, letting a plume of fire
escape his mouth as euphoria filled him.

God, it’d been so long.

He soon felt Danny’s presence next to him, the cold barely affecting him in this form. Phantom waved at him as he floated nearby and did a few flips in the air, eyes closed in contentment.

“Been a while, huh?” Jake heard Danny yell as he flapped his wings harder, flew higher.

Instead of replying, Jake let loose a roar and another burst of fire. Now several hundred feet from the ground, he tucked his wings and let himself fall face first.

Danny joined him in the dive, and soon the both of them were neck and neck, the ground rapidly growing closer. At the last moment, Jake unfurled his wings and snapped back into the air, narrowly missing Danny’s smaller stature, who yelped and swerved to the side.

Jake laughed. “You forget you have intangibility, Phantom?” As he spoke, he adjusted his flight and turned to glide along the edge of the Forbidden Forest.

Still in the process of righting himself, Danny grumbled out an unintelligible reply and quickly put on a burst of speed to match Jake’s as they flew. His stark white hair blew back against his head, showing all of his face, which previously would be covered by thick black hair. Green eyes squinted against the wind.

The two friends flew next to each other in silence, enjoying the serenity of the landscape. It was nice to get away from the responsibilities, the war, the Order, and Hogwarts in general.

Not for the first time, Jake found himself incredibly grateful that he wasn’t alone in this. Danny both actively supported him in whatever dumb thing he wanted to do and also kept his head level, made sure he didn’t lash out because of some stupid stereotype or awful racial opinion because the Dragon Council had failed to keep an eye on their charges. For someone who was expected to be a leader and representative for the entire Draco race, Jake definitely had lots more to learn on who deserved judgement and who simply didn't know better. And Danny, who hadn’t even known about the magical kingdom up until a few months ago, seemed to be trying his hardest to learn about everything he could.

Jake grinned to himself, moving to the side and bumping Danny, who yelped as he flailed around in the air for a second. He glared at the snickering dragon, firing up an ectoblast in his hand. Jake dove out of the way as the energy was shot his way, narrowly missing his shoulder.

“Hey!” Jake protested, ducking again as Danny shot another blast at him.

“Combat training!” Danny yelled, both hands now bathed in an eerie green light. He flew higher, holding out his fists and allowing ectoblasts to rain on Jake.

The dragon twisted his body to dodge the attacks, thankful for his Chinese genes giving him a more flexible figure. He dove, swerved, threw himself backwards, did a few somersaults… really, his maneuvers becoming more complicated as he gained more confidence. While he had no idea how ectoplasm would affect his very magical body, he wasn’t too inclined to find out.

Eventually Jake started shooting fire at Danny as well, causing the ghost to lose much of his focus as he tried to evade the flames. Though the two clearly didn’t really care all that much about who won, surprisingly; both wore broad smiles on their faces, tumbling through the air as they chased each other along the edge of the forest and and miles away from the castle.
Jake, adrenaline still coursing through his body, put on a burst of speed as he dodged another attack from Phantom, flying past him and watching the trees blur beneath him. He heard Danny’s calls from behind, and choosing to ignore them, continued to climb higher and move faster and faster, the wind at his back and the sun keeping him warm, free in the air as he used his wings for what felt like the first time in forever, and Hogwarts was far behind-

He crashed.

Though he didn’t see what had hit him, Jake suddenly found himself falling to the ground in shock, his wings strangely paralyzed. A bit of panic seeping in, he flailed his limbs around and let his chi pull his dragon body back in the hopes of gaining back control, only to realize that it, too, seemed to be frozen.

*What the hell!* 

His chi vibrated but didn’t move, not in the way he was used to, almost as if it were stuck-

A strong pair of arms grabbed his midsection and pulled up, managing to slow their descent. Danny grunted and turned both of them intangible, so that when they hit the ground, they wouldn’t take any injuries.

The halfa lifted them both from halfway into the ground and onto the surface again, where Jake lay, still only slightly able to move his body but not nearly enough to escape. His chi twitched, still wrapped around his body as he remained in dragon form, unable to pull back.

Jake’s breath quickened. He was *trapped.*

And it wasn’t even trapped in his human form. This time, he was stuck inside his scales, but it wasn’t as comforting as it should’ve been. His skin seemed to become tighter around him, his chi continuing to send out quivers of distress, and it was getting harder to breathe-

“Jake!” Danny slapped the side of his face. “*Jake!* What’s wrong?”

An uncharacteristic whine escaped his throat. *I’m trapped!* he wanted to scream. *Get this skin off of me!* What was *wrong* with him? Why did his dragon form feel like a cage?

Why wasn’t his chi *moving?*

“Oh, God, okay,” Danny muttered. His face had gone pale, paler than usual. He moved around Jake’s body, running a hand along the green spines on his back, murmuring to himself. While he was out of Jake’s field of vision, he called in a tight voice, “Dude, you’ve gotta breathe. Jake, *breathe.*”

Jake felt his ribcage expanding and contracting rapidly, too fast to be healthy, and black spots danced before his eyes. Was that Danny speaking? Was anyone actually speaking? Where was he?

“Shit, I think you’re panicking,” he heard a familiar voice say. “Jake. Jake, look at me.”

A black jumpsuit moved in front of him. Jake flicked his eyes up to meet Danny’s toxic green ones, distantly noting how large and worried they looked.

Jake forced himself to focus on Danny, staring intently at the halfa’s eyes, his freckles, the hand pressing comfortingly into his head. Inside his body, he felt his chi relax, the quivers stopping. Something unfurled from his chest, the tightness disappearing, and his magical energy finally pulled back from his scales and back into their normal place as he shifted back into his human form.

Jake threw his hands over his face and touched the human skin, pulled at his hair, clutched at his throat. His body shook. When he closed his eyes, he could feel his chi there in his chest, intact, still in distress but not *trapping* him.

What the hell was that? What the-

Jesus Christ, was he *crying*?

Danny had transformed back into Fenton sometime after Jake gained back control. He put his arms around Jake’s shoulders, asking, “Is it okay if I hug you?”

Jake nodded jerkily and allowed himself to be pulled close, pressing his face against Danny’s cold, cold chest and trying to escape the feeling of being caged like that. A few seconds later and the arms around him started to feel too tight, so he pushed himself away, and Danny immediately let go.

The two helped each other up, Jake subconsciously leaning on Danny as his legs shook. He stared numbly at his human hands, then to the area he’d been flying towards before… before *that* had happened.

Jake stepped towards the area; it was a few feet away from the Forbidden Forest, by a small cliff with a dirt road that led down to what he could vaguely recognize as multiple rooftops. A village?

“Jake?” Danny jogged up behind him. “Jake, what is it?”

“Something crashed into me,” Jake mumbled, stretching out his hand. At the last moment, he pulled it back, suddenly very cautious about whatever could be there.

“Do you feel anything?” Danny asked him. Nervousness tinged his voice.

There was a slight hum in the air in front of him, but it felt… dry. Itchy. Unsafe.

Jake nodded. “Something. I think…” he trailed off. “A ward, maybe.”

Danny squinted at the empty air in front of him. “Why would a ward be there?”

“I don’t know.” Jake looked down at his hands again in frustration, then furiously wiped his eyes with his arm, suddenly angry at himself. “The fuck was that?”

“I don’t know. But, Jake…” Danny swallowed hard. “Whatever it is, it can’t be good. Do you think it’s a threat to Hogwarts?”

“Maybe, I don’t-” Jake stopped. “Wait. How far away are we from the school?”

“A few miles, I’m guessing. I think that down there is Hogsmeade. Hermione told me about it, and I think Minerva showed us-”

“Yeah, but this isn’t the entrance to it,” Jake interrupted. “The student way is much more accessible, and I think it’s a little closer to the school. I think… this may be a way to keep threats
from reaching the school.”

“You mean this is a border?” Danny asked, his voice colored with shock. “But the borders aren’t supposed to hurt the students. I mean.” A beat, and when he spoke again, it was much softer. “Jake, you just had a panic attack after coming into contact with that thing.”


“It what?”

“It paralyzed me by keeping my chi frozen around my body, so I was unable to shift back to human form or really move at all. I was trapped.”

Danny swore. “What the hell is this thing? And why would they put it there if it has such an effect on magical energy?”

Fury began to boil in Jake’s stomach. “Because it doesn’t affect wizard energy,” he spat. “Theirs is much more spread out, whereas mine is easy to pinpoint because it’s all coiled up. This was made for me.”

Danny looked like he was about to throw up. “You’re kidding.”

“I’ll betcha they put some measures for the halfa, too,” Jake continued, unaware of the flames that had begun to rise above his skin in his anger. “You told the Order of your ice core, right? The teachers know what you’re made out of. Or, at least, mostly. I wouldn’t be surprised if they managed to find a way to attack your powers, too, if you ever touch the border.”

Danny took a few steps back. “They’re trying to keep us here?”

Jake’s laugh was hollow, mirthless. “Why risk losing such valuable allies? Especially when they’re both known to be brought here against their will?”

Hogwarts suddenly seemed much less welcoming.

The ride back was silent.

After the craziness with the Portal, learning ghosts were real, and becoming a half-ghost vigilante while evading his ghost-hunting parents who didn’t know their own son was half-dead, Danny liked to think he could adapt to any situation.

Then wizards were thrown into the mix, and he was like, _Okay, this is weird, but not unexpected._

_Improvise. Adapt. Overcome. All that jazz._

Through it all, he’d truly believed the wizards believed in their capacity to help. Clockwork clearly trusted these guys, said they were _allies_, and Dumbledore had been nothing but hospitable, even if Danny and Jake were a little rude at times. The Order had let them into their ranks despite still being teenagers, and the year had started off with high spirits and a good plan on how to tackle the monstrosity that was Hogwarts.

And now?

Danny glanced back at Jake, who flew a few feet behind him in dragon form. His copper eyes were alight with fury, little bursts of smoke coming from his nostrils every few breaths. When Jake had
crashed into the barrier, twitching and unable to move, eyes clouded over in panic, Danny had genuinely feared for his life. He had no way to perform healing magic on him, they were too far away to call for help, and whatever it was that had attacked him could still come back for more. But it seemed that whatever happened wore off as soon as he’d relaxed, and with it came the revelation that the wizards were trying to keep them here, in Hogwarts, not with trust, but with a barrier that had the capacity to shorten out their powers. It was a terrifying thought, especially since Draco’s had magical energy stronger than a wizard’s, not to mention ectoplasm being capable of canceling out that magic in the first place.

Whatever enchantment had been put on the border, it was ancient and powerful.

And all this on the first day. Had the wizards wanted them to know about this? Were they going to be informed? Why not warn them? Did they not trust the representatives? Did they see the two as a threat?

Was there an ulterior motive to wanting the two there?

Danny’s mind flashed to a dissection table, sharp needles glinting in fluorescent lighting. He suppressed a shiver. No way was he letting himself fall into any more traps.

“We’re not mentioning this to anyone,” Danny said before he could think. “The wizards need to believe they have control over us.”

To his surprise, Jake didn’t argue. “Yeah. I know. If they find out we know about the border, they might take even more measures to keep us here.” He flapped his wings harder to pick up some speed, standing closer to Danny’s side. “I’ll call Fu this evening to ask him about any spells that can shorten out powers like that. Can I use your phone?”

“You can try,” Danny answered, starting to descend as they reached the Black Lake. “Service is slow, and I haven’t tried calling anyone yet. We also have a fireplace in our room, we can try the Floo Network.”

“If it’s not being watched,” Jake muttered.

“I wonder where Clockwork is,” Danny mused. There had been no sign of his mentor for a while now, but surely he’d appear if the wizarding was actively trying to keep them in one place?

Then again, he could see all of time. If he hadn’t interfered yet, then Danny had to trust the things were happening as they should.

Hopefully.

A chiming brought Danny out of his thoughts. He landed to the ground, with Jake next to him, already back in human form. “Right on time,” Jake announced as the bell continued to sound. “Alright, Casper, where to?”

Danny shrugged. “Defense Against the Dark Arts, I guess.”

Jake nodded. “Alright.” He began to move towards the front of the building before stopping and turning his head slightly towards the halfa. “By the way,” he began, and Danny was surprised to hear a slight waver in his voice. “Thanks, Danny. For, uh, you know.”

Breathe, Jake. It’s okay, Jake.

Danny gave him a reassuring smile, squeezing his shoulder as he walked by. “Of course. What are
friends for?”

(In his mind’s eye, he saw Jazz holding his hand as she led him away from his parents, who were in the middle of dissecting a small ghost on their kitchen table due to running out of space downstairs. He couldn’t get the smell of burnt ectoplasm out of his nose for a week.)

(“You’re gonna be just fine, Danny,” Jazz said softly, rubbing circles into his back as he sat curled up on the bathroom floor, hands shaking at the memory of the new gun his parents had tried on him.)

Jake grinned at him.

*You’re gonna do great things, man. Don’t let the haters get you down!*

Danny grinned back.

Danny and Jake were the first ones in the DADA classroom. Thanks, ghost powers!

With the lack of any technology such as a SmartBoard, a projector, or any computers, the classroom definitely made up for it with the gigantic skeleton of some reptile hanging overhead. Jake had peered at the thing suspiciously, wondering out loud if it were a feral dragon or not. “Even if it is, I just hope it wasn’t hunted,” he told Danny. The blackboard had already been wiped clean in time for the new class, and the rows of tables were perfectly lined up, each desk separated from one another so as not to cause any distractions from the students.

Umbridge stood up from her desk as soon as she saw them, a sneer already morphing her expression into something incredibly unpleasant to look at. Danny stared at all the pink in horror. Normally he didn’t mind the color pink. But this… this was awful. This was an insult to pink.

“Hey, Dolores,” Jake greeted her with fake cheerfulness. “We’re here to observe the class-”

“You will address me as Professor Umbridge,” the toad interrupted, “and nothing else. As for observation, I’ll have you two sit in the back corner.” She waved her hand towards the back, and Danny turned his head to look at two small, hard chairs pushed up against the wall. Clearly she’d been told to have them ready for the representatives, but unwilling to actually try and make them comfortable.

Whatever.

“Do not distract my class,” she continued, wrinkling her nose in Jake’s direction. Danny got the distinct expression it was directed at his hair.

“Alright, Dolores ,” Jake chirped, saluting her. “Thanks a bunch!”

Before Umbridge could hex him, Danny quickly cut in with, “You won’t even notice us here, ma’am. Oh, hey, look, students. We’ll be on our way now.”

The few kids that had entered stared at them as they made their way to the back. Danny gave them a tight smile as he sat down, inwardly groaning at how uncomfortable the chairs were.

“I hate her already,” Jake murmured. He wiggled in his seat. “Were these things carved out of a rock?”

Danny tried to muffle a laugh. “Let’s just get through this. Remember, she can’t be completely
awful. You have to report anything of interest to the Council.”

“Yo, you’re right. Oh, I take it back, this should be fun.”

Within minutes, the classroom had filled with students. It seemed to be occupied mostly by Ravenclaws and a few Gryffindors, all fifth year, obviously. Danny noticed Neville sitting a few rows down and grabbed his attention by waving when he looked their way. The shy boy smiled at them and waved back, setting down his things closer to the back so he could be closer.

Least they weren’t completely alone.

A few other students looked their way curiously, whispers filling the room. While some approached, none actually mustered up the courage to say hello. (Except Neville, an angel who could do no wrong.) Danny tried his best to keep his facial expression friendly, and noticed Jake doing the same as he continued to fidget in his very uncomfortable chair.

“Settle down, children,” Umbridge called. She waved her wand and the door closed on its own. Moving from behind her desk to the front of the room, she said, “Good morning.”

Mutters of “morning” rang around the room. Jake and Danny did not join in.

Umbridge smiled tightly. “Now, now, my previous class did the same mistake. When I say ‘good morning,’ you answer with, ‘Good morning, Professor Umbridge.’ It’s the same with goodbyes and any yes or no question. If I were to say, ‘Do you understand?’ you’d reply with…”

The class stayed mostly silent, staring at her in confusion. Jake put his head in his hands, moaning softly, “Jesus fucking Christ I can’t believe this woman-”

“You’d say, ‘Yes, Professor Umbridge,’” the toad simpered. “Now, let’s try that again. Good morning, class!”

“Good morning, Professor Umbridge,” the class murmured, still relatively unanimously.

“Again. Come now, we’re wasting time. Surely smart children such as you can say something so simple.”

“Good morning, Professor Umbridge,” the class chorused, a little louder this time.

Umbridge beamed (except it looked grotesque on her, as did every other expression). “See! Now, that wasn’t so hard, was it?”

A few kids shrugged.

“That’s not the way. Come on, what do we say?”

“No, Professor Umbridge,” about two-thirds of the class finally said.

“Oh my God,” Jake groaned. Danny snickered.

Umbridge chose to ignore the comments coming from the back, instead whipping out her wand and writing in the air. On the blackboard, chalk lines began to appear, spelling out Ordinary Wizarding Levels. “OWLS are essential in choosing your future career plans,” she began. “Though your curriculum in this class has been severely fragmented, I am here to ensure you get back on track with a Ministry-approved setting that lays out all the foundations for anything you’d need to know about Defense Against the Dark Arts!”
Next to Danny, Jake grunted.

Yeah, that didn’t sound good to Danny, either.

Umbridge flicked her wand, and from her desk, a pile of textbooks flew out and began handing themselves out to the students. “Wands away!” she chirped, the students’ expressions falling into confusion, then disbelief, and finally, crushing sadness as they looked at the textbook and put away their wands.

Danny leaned forward to take a look at the cover from one of the students nearest to him. *Basics for Beginners?* Weren’t these kids already into their fifth year of training?

Now slightly suspicious of the teacher’s motives, Danny spoke up, “Can we get one or two of those back here, too?”

Umbridge froze, her cheeks reddening slightly. “Whyever would you want one?”

“So we can see what y’all are teachin’ the kids,” Jake piped up, catching on. “I mean, I’m supposed to report back anything worth noting, and I think it would make everything easier if I - we - could see what exactly it is that makes you think you need to go back to the basics.” Clearly, he didn’t agree with the choice of books, either.

Umbridge clenched her wand tightly but assented, sending a textbook flying towards the back. Jake caught it easily, cocking an eyebrow. “Careful, I could’ve gotten hurt.”

A few students laughed softly. Umbridge clapped her hands loudly, gaining their attention once more. That infuriating smile was back as she said, “Open to the first page and read chapter one. We will do this for the entire period, and I want not one peep out of you.”

The next five minutes were filled with nothing but the turning of pages as students sullenly did as they were told. Jake and Danny, however, looked through the table of contents and flipped through different sections in order to get a feel for what they’d be learning, except… there didn’t really seem to be anything.

“I thought this was a practical class,” Danny murmured.

Jake sighed, putting his hand in the air. Umbridge ignored him, despite her eyes clearly meeting his. Danny waited a few moments before whispering, “You realize you’re not a student,” and Jake put his hand down.

“Professor?” Jake called out. After no reply, he tried, “Dolores?”

That got her attention, as well as many of the students’.

“*What*,” Umbridge ground out, “is it?”

“Ah, nothin’ much,” Jake replied smoothly. “Just wondering, uh, if we’ve got the right class here. Danny and I were told by the headmaster that this was a practical class? Yet there isn’t really anything in here about using defensive spells.”

“It doesn’t even really tell you *how* to use them,” Danny added, flipping a few pages. “It talks about what they could do and who made them up, but actually using them? *Nada*.”

“He’s right,” a Ravenclaw girl realized from the front. “Don’t we have to show we can do the spell during exams?”
"First of all," Umbridge said in a high voice, jabbing her finger at the student who had spoken up, "I do not tolerate anyone speaking unless their hands are raised. That includes you, dragon. And you, hybrid."

Danny bristled. "He did have his hand up. And anyway, we’re not students-"

"Secondly," Umbridge interrupted, "I’ve already had this conversation with my last class, and I will say it again for you: none of you are being taught how to use defensive spells because there is no need to. The Ministry-"

"The Ministry is supposed to keep the students safe," Jake said. His eyes neared their coppery tone from when he was in dragon form, his jaw clenched. "I was told that this class is one of the most important in the school because it’s so practical."

Well, that hadn’t been outright said, but Danny wasn’t going to complain. It’d been heavily implied, what with all the shit going down in the outside world, and he wasn’t going to side with the toad after that comment on his half-human status.

"You have no jurisdiction over what the Ministry teaches its students," Umbridge spat. "I would appreciate it, dragon-"

"I have a name," Jake snarled. "If you can’t use it, then don’t address me at all."

"I would appreciate it if you stopped disrupting my class," Umbridge continued, unphased.

Danny immediately jumped to his friend’s defense. "We’re not telling you how to teach your class, but we are concerned with the curriculum that refuses to teach its students spells. We literally came here to make sure everything is running smoothly, that there’s no threat, and now you’re telling us you’re not even preparing the kids?"

"And what," Umbridge said, breathing heavily, "would they need to be prepared for?"

"Unbelievable!" Jake near-shouted, jumping up from his seat. A few students flinched away. "There’s a murderer loose! He’s not gonna spare y’all because you’re kids! Hogwarts isn’t always going to protect-"

"That’s enough!" Umbridge roared, slamming her hands down on the table. "I will not tolerate such insolence from a mere animal!"

Oh, shit.

Jake’s eyes darkened. "Watch what you say," he hissed, and flames began to flicker over the surface of his skin.

Danny felt his core him; static played in the air, and he knew his hair was probably beginning to stand on end. He stood rigid, prepared to stop any fight from breaking out, but also leaning towards joining in if it meant shutting that woman up.

"I will not," Umbridge sang, unaware of how much danger she was in. "Last I checked, you are only here because the Ministry allowed it. You are not human, and you pose more of a threat towards the students than any liars who say the Dark Lord is back, which he is not. It is not your place to tell us how to teach."

"Alright, lady," Danny butt in, seeing how upset Jake was getting. "You’re the one escalating this. We asked why you weren’t doing practical teachings, and the only answer you gave was because
you don’t think anyone actually needs it, when Hogwarts has been doing practical stuff for years before Voldemort was said to have returned.” He ignored the gasps around the room as he said the wizard’s name. “And then you have the audacity to insult my friend by not only calling him an animal, but also that he is more of a threat to the students than the literal wizard Nazi who murdered hundreds of people.”

“I—"

“I’m not finished,” Danny snapped. “The Dracos are risking a lot by sending their best people out to protect magic schools. Clockwork, too, is putting a lot on the line by opening up the Ghost Zone to you. So don’t you ever say we don’t deserve to be here, that you could get rid of us at any time - we only came because you, the Ministry as well as Dumbledore, asked us to. If you want our help, you’d better show us some respect.”

You could hear a pin drop with how quiet the room was afterwards.

While Danny tried to keep the temperature around him relatively warm, Umbridge grew redder and redder. She spluttered, “Get out. Get out of my classroom.”

“Gladly,” Jake growled and abruptly stood up.

Danny held him back a moment. “We’ll be coming back tomorrow for a full class. We’re required to stick around that long.”

And with that, both of them made their way out, neither looking back.

The next two periods they sat in went much smoother; they picked Charms and History of Magic, two subjects that had them sitting in the back of the room quietly, not making eye contact with any of the students. (Though the two of them silently paid attention in History of Magic; it was an interesting class, and there were so many wars Danny had trouble believing no one nonmagical had never noticed anything.

Later in the day, during lunch, the two of them found themselves in the Great Hall, sitting next to the Trio, who complained about their day.

“Potions was bloody awful, as always,” Ron said through a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

“I think Snape hates me more than usual this year,” Harry sighed.

“Snape’s the least of your problems,” Hermione said with a raised brow. “Honestly, Harry, detention? On the first day?”

Jake whistled. Over the course of the day, his mood had lifted considerably, and his eyes had returned to their normal brown. “Detention? I’m impressed.”

“My twin,” Danny joked, biting into a piece of chicken. “So, who gave it to you?”

Harry sighed. “Umbridge. I think Angelina is angry at me. I’ll be missing Keeper tryouts this Friday.”

Jake glared down at his food. “Ah, the toad bitch.”

Hermione choked. “Jake!”

“We didn’t even last a class with her,” Danny sighed. “Ancients, she was awful. She hates
everyone who isn’t human and thinks they’re automatically a threat to the school, apparently.”

Ron stared at them. “Seriously?”

“I’m not surprised,” Hermione said. “She said awful things about Professor Lupin, the werewolf, even if he was the best teacher we’ve had.”

“What period did you guys have her?” Jake asked.

“First,” Ron answered. “Harry blew up at her.”

Harry flushed. “I—”

“Oh, it was bloody brilliant,” Ron continued. “The hag was going on about how we wouldn’t need defensive spells, how Harry was a liar, and the bloke challenges her on what she thought happened last year. He obliterated her.”

“Granted, he got a detention,” Hermione said. “You have to be careful with your temper, Harry.”

“I disagree,” Jake said. “Someone had to put her in her place. Danny delivered a whole fucking speech and everything. It was awesome.”

Danny hid a grin. “What can I say? She was disrespecting you and refusing to teach the students proper defense tactics. Tip number one from a vigilante: always assume the worst.”

“Amen to that,” Jake sang, raising his goblet high.

“Yes, well,” a voice said behind them, “unfortunately for you, Dolores didn’t seem to think so.”

The two of them whirled around. Minerva McGonagall stood there, impassive as always, flowing green robe framing her imposing figure as she glared down at them.

Jake gave her a lopsided grin. “Minerva! How’s it going! Long time no see!”

The witch sighed. “Yes, well. I have been rather busy. It seems you have been, too.”

For a moment, Danny wondered if she knew they’d discovered the border. Her next words, however, almost prompted a sigh of relief to escape his lips.

“Professor Umbridge has complained to Albus and I about you two,” Minerva said. “I hear you got into a screaming match with her during class?”

Danny’s mouth formed an O. Yeah, they were in trouble.

Jake laughed nervously. “In our defense, she was really rude.”

“I am aware,” Minerva said stiffly. “I am also aware of her… flawed teaching methods. However, it was unacceptable to challenge her during class.”

“You don’t understand, she—” Danny began heatedly.

“If you ever run into her, and if she asks what punishment I gave you,” Minerva continued, unfazed, “tell her I gave you a lengthy lecture on why you shouldn’t challenge a teacher’s authority in their class. I also told you that if something like this happens again, I will be dishing out a more severe punishment. Since it is your first offense and you can’t possibly know better, being new to the wizarding world, you’re getting let off easy.” She spun around and made her way out of the
Great Hall without giving them any time to reply.

Danny stared at her retreating back. “I guess she doesn’t like the toad either.”

Jake let out a bought of laughter. “She’s gained a little more of my respect.”

Having already gone to two and a half periods, the boys decided it would be fine to just get back to the Room of Requirement and call it a day. They said their goodbyes and bade Harry good luck at his detention, then quickly entered their room and immediately raided the mini fridge for snacks to eat, and finished it off by changing into their pajamas and sitting on Jake’s bed.

Danny picked up his phone and checked the battery. Thirty percent. He sighed, rubbing the back of his neck.

An idea formed in his head. Charging his fingers up with ectoenergy, he touched the back of his phone and slowly poured some energy into the metal.

“Watcha doin’?” Jake asked curiously, a soda in his hand.

“My phone is basically surrounded by ghostly energy at this point,” Danny replied, eyes narrowing in concentration. “It’s the only way it can actually work, right? So, I was thinking, it’s not too much different from some of my other ghost weaponry. Like my thermos, for instance, which is charged by ectoenergy.”

“You think you can charge up your phone by pouring a little bit of ghost power into it?” Jake’s voice sounded skeptical.

Danny shrugged. “It’s worth a try… and… yes!” He held up the phone triumphantly, which had started to glow from the inside with a faint blue light.

Jake raised an eyebrow. “What does that light mean?”

“It’s what happens when ghostly energy and technology start combining to work together.” Danny tapped the phone a few more times and squealed as the battery symbol in the top right corner began to climb up in percentages. “Oh Tucker’s gonna love this! I think we wanted to try this before, but didn’t want to ruin any phones in case it didn’t work; but this is kind of a last resort, and now we can have permanent access to technology inside a magic school!”

Jake snorted. “Nerd.” He stood up from the bed and made his way to the kitchen area, digging around in the cabinets for a pop tart. “Seriously, though, that’s pretty cool. Can I call Fu Dog later with it?”

“Sure,” Danny said, following him. “I would try to see if I could fix your phone up, too, but I don’t know how it would react to ectoenergy if it hasn’t been previously exposed to it.”

“Like building up an immunity?” Jake shrugged. “That’s fine. I’d rather my phone stay ghost energy-free, anyway.”

Danny yawned and tapped the counter. It was strange to think he’d be sleeping in this room for the rest of the year. “Crazy day.”

Jake sighed. “You’re telling me. And it’s only the first.” He leaned against the counter, ran his hands through his hair. “I really hope there isn’t some shady double-crossing business goin’ on in Hogwarts. Don’t really feel like dealing with betrayals right now.”
Danny nodded. He opened a cabinet and took out a bag of decaf, shrugging to himself. At least it would taste good.

“I mean, besides Umbridge,” Jake added as an afterthought while Danny worked with the coffee machine. “She obviously hates us. Minerva hates her, too, but it’s weird that she doesn’t really have much power over her, even though they’re both teachers. Being part of the Ministry gives you a lot of street cred, I s’pose.”

“Honestly,” Danny commented, watching Jake take a ravenous bite out of the pop tart with a sort of detached interest, “I’m kind of offended.”

“I know, right?” Jake said cheerfully around a mouthful of pop tart. “Fuckin’, uh, wizards, man. Tellin’ us we’re super respected, only to yell at us - well, sorta - for telling off a teacher who was clearly out of line? Whack.”

Danny cracked a tired grin. “Her hair? Whack.”

“Her gear?” Jake continued, catching on. “Whack.”

“Her jewelry? Whack!”

“Her footstance?” Jake laughed. “Whack!”

“Way that she talks?” Danny held in a snort. “Whack.”

“The way that she doesn’t even like to smile?” Jake was barely able to contain himself now, setting the pop tart on the table as he sniggered and leaned forward. “Wh-whack.”

“Me?” Danny said loudly, leaning forward on the table as well in preparation for the finale.

“I’m tight as fuck!” the two boys simultaneously screamed, Jake pounding on the table for good measure. They howled with laughter, stomachs beginning to hurt as they shared a high five.

“Ah…” Jake snickered, drawing a finger below his eye as he wiped away a fake tear. “Good to see at least someone appreciates meme culture.”

“Truly.” Danny raised his mug of coffee and downed it in one gulp.

“Hey, Danny?”

“Yeah, Jake?”

“I’m glad you’re here with me.”

Danny smiled, tousling Jake’s hair. “Me too, Shorty.”

Jake made an indignant sound in the back of his throat, swatting Danny’s hands away. The ghost laughed.

They’d find out what it was the wizards were trying to do by keeping them trapped. They’d get help from the outside. They’d figure out how to deal with Umbridge, and they’d work on keeping the school safe from threats that many still didn’t seem to understand existed.

But for now, they’d eat junk food and go to bed early, trying to forget how long it’d be before they’d be able to go home.
rule number one of writing: you need conflict eventually !!1!!1!!

danny likes the killers and jake likes oliver tree. i don't brew the tea i just serve it

so i'm like 80% sure neville was in harry's DADA class, but i thought i'd change it for this fic just because i thought jake and danny could use a friend in that classroom lmao. they didn't go to first period so they didn't see harry absolutely fucking obliterate toad gorl but they had their own fun of their own and you know i had to have neville there to see it (plus it comes into play later on in the story so uhhh fight me)

video cred: WACK
assert ur dominance over ur friends by callin them short

Chapter Summary

Jake @ Danny: i love you, bitch. i ain't ever gonna stop lovin you, bitch

Danny: aw, thanks, shorty mcfuckface :)

Chapter Notes

the plot is getting THICC, lads

my word count for chapters keep going up,, this one is just under 9k, while the first couple were probably around 5k. i think it'll go down again once school starts tomorrow and i have to deal with hw hghhfg

reminder that i have this thing up on FFN as well! under the same username :) if u wanna go follow it to know when updates are coming, you can do so! i'll be uploading this chapter there after i do so here

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Voldemort’s followers continue to wreak havoc on the wizarding world,” Kingsley Shacklebolt reported as a way to begin the meeting. “Nothing too major in the past few days; at least, no new deaths have been reported, but a few people have been put in the hospital.”

“And Fudge?” Arthur Weasley asked.

“Knows of the issues, but refuses to believe it’s because of You-Know-Who’s return, as per usual.” The Auror’s voice was laden with tiredness, clearly at his wit’s end with the Minister’s refusal to see sense. “I am afraid this will continue to escalate unless he acknowledges they aren’t completely unorganized.”

“The Death Eaters are getting orders,” Remus added. “It’s clear they know what they’re doing, and they’re having a grand time with it.”

At the head of the table, Albus laced his fingers together. “Is there any word of what more they could be planning? Severus?”

The Potions professor scowled. “The same reports. The Dark Lord is moving in on his weapon, hoping it will give him an edge on the wizarding world, and, as always, as a way to kill Potter. Knowledge is his goal here.”

Sitting closest to the door, Danny looked up from his hands to ask, “Knowledge for what, exactly?” After a moment, he added, “Clearly his goal isn’t only terrorism.”

“He has tried and failed again and again to get rid of Harry,” Sirius said, “and each time to no avail. If he has found something that can give him an edge in any way, whether it be a special
wand or - or whatever, he will do anything in his power to stop it. He knows Harry is the only thing standing in his way.”

Jake cleared his throat. “Oh?”

Sirius looked like wanted to answer, but Molly cut in. “Shouldn’t we talk more about the movements of those ghastly Death Eaters instead? So Danny and Jake know where and who is most dangerous to the students?”

“I appreciate your concern for the children,” Albus said kindly, “but you must understand that Jake and Danny aren’t only here to visit. They are capable fighters who have been invited to join the Order by the decision of Minerva and I, and we firmly believe they have a right to know everything. We must be transparent, despite them being, admittedly, very young.”

Molly pursed her lips, reluctantly assenting.

To Jake, Albus said, “There is a prophecy which connects Lord Voldemort and young Harry together. In it, it states that Harry is a threat to him, and that neither can live while the other survives-”

“The hell?” Jake interrupted, sitting straight. “Neither can what while the other what?”

“Does Harry know about this?” Danny asked in a lower voice.

A few people in the room shifted uncomfortably. “I cannot burden him with the knowledge,” Albus said.

“Lemme get this straight-” Jake’s voice was rising, and beside him, Danny stared at the old man in disbelief, “You’re not telling Harry Potter, a fifteen-year-old kid, about a prophecy which places him in the supposed position of killing a dark wizard, the sole reason why said wizard is targeting him specifically? When are you planning on telling him? Before Voldemort kills him?”

The room fell into deadly silence. Sirius stared straight ahead at the wall, eyes seemingly trying to burn a hole into the wallpaper.

“You’re sending him to his death,” Danny managed to choke out. “I can’t believe you people.”

“We,” Molly said in a high pitched voice, “will do no such thing. We won’t - I won’t - let that happen. He means too much. He deserves so much.”

“It’s why we have to find the prophecy before You-Know-Who,” Remus said. “He cannot be allowed to know the specifics. If he doesn’t, we can keep Harry safe, and they may never have to fight.”

Danny turned his gaze to Dumbledore. The man’s face was near unreadable, but in his eyes lay a flicker of unrest. He knew something the others didn’t.

“If Potter were to know all that happens in the Order, we may be in more danger than before,” Snape drawled, sounding entirely unsympathetic. “He has a link to the Dark Lord. There is still the danger of becoming possessed.”

“That won’t happen,” Molly protested. Snape only gave her a slight eye roll.

The Order members all wanted to keep Harry safe, especially Molly and Sirius, who both had a large soft spot for the boy. And, as much as both Jake and Danny hated to admit it, they were right,
in a way, about keeping the prophecy a secret. If Voldemort did have a link to Harry’s head because of what had happened fourteen years ago, then keeping the prophecy a secret would have no effect, as the murderer would be able to glean it from Harry’s head, anyway.

It was infuriating, however, that Harry had no idea any of this was happening. As the days went on by, Dumbledore’s manipulation techniques were becoming more and more apparent.

“Do not mention this to the others, please,” the headmaster now told them. “Keeping Harry in the dark will not be for long, I can assure you. And we will provide him with all the help we have.”

Though Jake didn’t quite buy it, Danny recognized the subject change and nodded haltingly. “Yeah. Right. Jake?”

“Whatever,” the dragon muttered.

From there, issues turned to the movements of the Death Eaters, as Molly had suggested. Danny and Jake kept most of their thoughts to themselves, each keeping a mental tally on how many times Albus continued to show a side of his that seemed to thrive off of secrets and subtle manipulation.

“What do you think?”

From the other end of the line, Fu Dog sighed. “I honestly don’t know, kid. Seems sketchy to me. You sure your chi froze?”

“No, like, literally,” Jake replied, irritation leaking into his voice. “I told you, it was like it kinda just stopped whatever it was doing. I couldn’t shift forms. I was paralyzed.”

“And it wore off after you calmed down.”

“Yep.” He picked at the bedsheets nervously, legs drawing closer to his chest. From the sparring room, he could hear Danny kicking at the dummies, as well as the occasional ectoblast.

“Tell ya what, Jakey.” Fu said at last. “I’ll look into the lore a bit to see what kind of spell that was. It sounds vaguely familiar, but once you’ve lived as long as me, you tend to forget some stuff. You understand…”

Jake waved his hand dismissively, though he knew his animal guardian couldn’t see it. “Yeah, yeah. Thanks, Fu.”

“Course, kid.” The line went silent for a couple moments, then Fu spoke up again, and this time, his voice sounded much more worried. “You sure you don’t want any backup? This sounds serious. Why keep you guys trapped without letting you go beforehand?”

Jake sighed, rubbing his temples. “It’s okay, Fu. Y’all got enough on your plate back at home. Danny and I’ll keep it covered here, try and figure out just what the hell is going on. Although…” he trailed off.

“What?”

“It’s just, with the way the Ministry workers - at least, the ones we’ve met - have been treatin’ us, it’s like we were brought here against their will. Dumbledore made it sound like it was more of a compromise, y’know, we come to the school and they let in their own leeches or whatever, but I don’t know.” The dragon groaned. “I think they were telling the truth about us watching out for the kids, but obviously there’s somethin’ more going on.”
“A larger threat?”

“If it’s a threat,” Jake said, “then what do they think it is? Us, or the murderer no one believes is actually back?”

“You and Danny, you’re crazy powerful, compared to the wizards,” Fu told him. “I’m actually a bit worried about Danny. Haven’t heard about halfas, like, ever. Anyway, the point is, the wizards are totally in the dark here. And I know you are, too, but you still have the Council at your back. Wizards, though? They just have to trust that you’re on their side.”

Jake raised a brow. “I have the Council at my back? Dawg, the Council hates my back.” He glanced back at the opening to the sparring room. “And don’t worry about Danny. Dude’s chill. I like him. Might bring him back to New York sometime, when this is all over.”

“Hey, I’m down for that. This is his phone you’re calling from?”

“Yeah, mine ran out of juice a while back, but he managed to charge it with his own powers.”

“I’m saving the number, then. This is a much quicker way to reach you than through those dumbass owls.”

Jake laughed. “Alright, Fu. But, uh, remember time zones.” He plucked at the sheets again. “I should probably get to Danny before he destroys the training dummies. I’ll talk to you later, yeah?”

“See ya, kid,” Fu grunted. “I’ll get back to you on that spell. And be careful, okay? The old man’ll have my hide if anything happens to you. Don’t stick your nose in places you’ll regret.”

“Me?” Jake scoffed. “Get in trouble? Please, yo.”

“Don’t say I didn’t warn ya!” Fu Dog yelled into the phone, then a click sounded and the line went dead.

Jake stared at Danny’s cell for a few more moments before letting out a long sigh and setting it down on the nightstand. He stretched his arms, wincing as his joints popped. “Yo, Casper!” he yelled while swinging his legs over the side of the bed. “It’s six thirty, wanna do anything?”

Something in the training room crashed to the floor, followed by a yelp. Jake hurried over and stuck his head through the doorway, eyes falling to where several sticks had fallen to the ground, Danny lying haphazardly on top of them in ghost form.

“Dummy knocked me out of the air,” Danny told him as way of explanation. His words were slightly slurred, and he was clutching his head. At the center of the circular room, an enchanted training dummy stood impassively, waiting for its opponent to stand up again.

Jake tried and failed to contain a snort.

“Ow,” Danny moaned dramatically.

“Here.” Jake walked over and helped him up. He poked the halfa’s head, who winced. Brows furrowing, Jake said, “Yeah. We’re gonna relax for the rest of the evening.”

Danny shot him a weak thumbs up.

The two made their way to the small bathroom, where Danny changed back into Fenton and pushed his hair out of the way to examine his head. A slight bruise looked to be forming, but the
boy just shrugged, saying it’d disappear sometime during the night.

Jake, having already taken a shower beforehand, went back to his bed and rifled through his luggage to see how many clothes he had left. The two had agreed to ask one of the staff where they could wash their clothes, since their room lacked a washing machine. Though he didn’t like it, Jake knew the answer would likely be going to the house elves.

Danny was finished with his shower in five minutes, and soon enough, he’d joined Jake at the bed, where they retrieved the schedules and spent a grueling hour looking through different class options over the next few days. While Danny intended to keep his promise of returning to DADA, Jake was adamant about going to Care of Magical Creatures. “I wanna see some firecrabs,” he exclaimed.

Danny laughed. “How do you know they’re teaching the students about firecrabs now?”

“We’ll find out!”

By the time they’d decided on a game plan, the clock had hit eight o’clock. Distantly, Jake noted that Harry would be out of his detention by now.

They went to bed early; Danny wanted to eat breakfast in the Great Hall and follow the Trio around for a bit before heading off to their classes, then have some time to relax before heading by the Forbidden Forest again (closer to the school this time). Over the next few days, Jake suggested going to the library to read up on spells that could potentially shorten out magical energy, and see if they could find anything on ectoenergy as well.

(Danny groaned at the prospect of research. Which, well, mood. Jake could sympathize.)

They joined the Gryffindor table at breakfast, getting there early so they didn’t have to deal with too many people making room for them on the benches. The only students already sitting were maybe a dozen by the end, two boys bickering over whether jam or whipped cream was better on pancakes, and Neville Longbottom reading a book on Herbology.

Danny and Jake sat across from him, the halfa waving at him when he looked up. Neville smiled broadly and closed his book with a *snap*, leaning forward eagerly.

“You guys were brilliant yesterday!” he sang. “Umbridge was fuming the rest of the class, but it was so worth it!”

Jake grinned at him as his goblet filled with tea. “Did we start an uprising?”

“Well, no… she actually took off a lot of points from students for whispering to one another, but like I said, worth it.” He was nearly bouncing in his seat. “Everyone’s been talking about you two and what you said!”

Danny cocked his head. “Good things?”

“Of course!” Neville assured him. “I heard Harry stirred up some trouble, too?”

Jake nodded. Danny couldn’t help but smile at Neville’s excitement; clearly, Umbridge was already hated throughout most of the school, even though not everyone had had her yet. And despite the adults’ recommendations not to stir up trouble, he couldn’t help but feel proud of himself for making her so angry.
Realizing he’d zoned out of the conversation, Danny forced himself out of his thoughts to hear Jake say, “...pretty funny how riled up she gets when I use her first name. None of the other teachers have much problem with it, but Dolores? Oh, it’s gonna be so much fun.”

“Careful,” Danny laughed, punching Jake’s shoulder, “you don’t wanna make her too mad, she might snap.”

“What’s she gonna do? Croak at me? That toad could never win in a fight against me.”

“Oh, Great American Dragon, your strength is unparalleled,” Danny said, putting a the back of his hand to his forehead.

Jake raised his eyebrows at Neville. “It’s true, yo.”

“As is your ego-”

“A’ight, Casper, you wanna go?”

“It’s a date!” Danny yelled, going intangible as Jake threw a piece of bacon at him.

The three of them laughed heartily and moved on to talking more about school, prompting Neville into a passionate speech about Herbology and how much he was going to enjoy this year. Though Danny didn’t understand half the plants he was talking about, it reminded him of Sam back in Amity, and a familiar pang of homesickness shot through him.

I hope I’ll be able to go home during Christmas break. Even if I have to endure another Santa Claus discussion with my parents.

The Great Hall filled with more students as they talked, and within minutes, most of the wizards had arrived. Jake and Danny waved at a few kids who greeted them, usually those that had seen them in their classes already, or recognized them from the stories about Umbridge’s class. Harry, Ron, and Hermione arrived not long after, with the intelligent witch complaining loudly about how Fred and George shouldn’t have been selling their candy to “those poor, easily manipulated first years.”

“Sup, nerds,” Jake said as way of greeting. “Hey, where are y’all goin’ for your next classes?”

Ron sighed. “Umbridge first period, Double Potions second, then, uh…”

Hermione chimed in, “We have Care of Magical Creatures today.”

“Yeah, that.”

Danny, letting Jake handle scheduling, turned to Harry, who had barely said a word. He was clutching his hand, eyebrows furrowed as he stared at the table, deep in thought. Danny bumped his shoulder against his, saying, “You good?”

Harry started, whipping his head around to stare at Danny with wide eyes. A moment later he relaxed, nodding. “Yeah, just had a late night.”

“Something up with your hand?” Danny asked, eyeing Harry’s fingers tapping incessantly on his knuckles of the hand he was hiding.

Harry shoved the hand in the pocket of his robe. “Nothing,” he muttered. At Danny’s worried look, he added, “Itches a little. I’m fine.”
Danny recognized the tone. *I’m fine.*

(“Danny, have you eaten today?”)

(“Are you okay, dude? You’re limping.”)

(“Why won’t you tell me what’s wrong, little brother? I’m only trying to help.”)

(“Danny, sweetie, is there something you’re not telling us? You’ve been so withdrawn recently…)

*I’m fine! You don’t have to worry about me, just had a late night. Box Ghost, you know how it is. Hey, look, I’ve got homework to do, so maybe we should focus on that? Seriously, guys, there’s nothing wrong. I’m peachy. Don’t worry about me. I’m okay.*

“All right, man,” Danny told Harry, not one to shove. “But, uh, I’m here if there’s anything you wanna talk about.”

The wizard nodded haltingly, turning back to the table and piling his plate high with food.

Danny took a deep breath (and though it wasn’t necessary for him to function, the motion felt familiar, grounded him) and told himself he’d keep and eye on Harry, be there for him when he’d need it, as he’d promised.

“I’m fine” was a bullshit term. Danny would know.

He wouldn’t push, though. That would only make Harry less likely to talk.

Danny turned his attention back to Jake, who had been animatedly beguiling the students around him with stories from America as a World Dragon in training. Hands spread wide and waving about, he was in the middle of describing another illegal goblin black market he and his grandfather had thwarted.

“I laid down some kickass Kung-Fu,” Jake recounted, voice dripping with excitement and just a little too much of smugness, “and, like, Gee had been trainin’ me for years before my first transformation, so I was already pretty good at that - and, man, you should’ve seen their faces! Imagine tryna sell some organs or whatever and suddenly two dragons come in doing martial arts!” He laughed, and around him, the students gaped at him in awe. “Never stood a chance!”

Danny grinned viciously. It was hilarious to see how much Jake enjoyed the attention, though no doubt he was exaggerating a little. Suddenly in the mood to mess with him, Danny spoke up.

“Weird, I didn’t see you using kickass Kung-Fu when I wiped the sparring mat with your dragon butt.”

Jake whipped his head around to glower. “First off,” he said threateningly, jabbing his index finger in the air, “That was the first night we were at Hogwarts, and last I checked, I beat you the time after that. As for the Kung-Fu, I totally did, you just didn’t know because you’re ignorant. Secondly, Casper, stop laughing- ” he sighed in exasperation as Danny laid his head on the table, back heaving with snickers, “-I was going easy on you. It would suck if I gave you any serious injuries and wouldn’t have anyone to complain to.”

“Sure you did,” Danny gasped, clutching his stomach.

“I was.”

“Of course.” He lifted his head and forced a neutral facial expression, but his lips continued to
twitch traitorously. Around them, the Gryffindors watched the exchange with wide eyes, unsure whether or not to laugh.

Jake poked Danny in the shoulder. “I could beat you again.”

“Really?” Danny taunted, thoroughly enjoying the mayhem he was causing. “I highly doubt that.”

Jake stood up from the table, causing the bench to slide back with a screech as a little bit of dragon strength bled into his motions. The students sitting on the bench yelped at the movement and stared at him flabbergasted. The dragon leaned in close to Danny, who continued to stare at him impassively, a relaxed smirk on his face. “You. Me. Training room. Now.”

Danny cocked an eyebrow. “Wow, even standing you’re barely taller than me.”

“As entertaining as it would be to watch you two beat each other up,” Hermione drawled before Jake could fly at him, “I believe the mail has arrived. Jake, if you don’t want to be attacked by owl claws, I would sit down.”

“He’s too short, they wouldn’t be able to see him, anyway,” Danny managed to get in before going intangible again as Jake swiped at him, his hands turned into claws.

A few other kids had called out, “Mail!” in warning, and while the majority ducked their heads, some brave souls sat higher to try and spot their owl. They came in through the windows from the top of the room, screeching and hooting, the rustle of papers louder than their wings. While some landed on the tables, others simply dropped their letters and packages in front of the students, whether it be on their food, next to their food, on their head, or in their hands. Really, it was a rather dangerous environment. Not to mention the feathers everywhere.

Though Danny hadn’t seen the mail system in progress before, he chose to keep his head ducked and pray the owls didn’t try and attack him. Animals had always reacted strangely to him ever since the accident, and he wasn’t going to try his luck with a predator bird that sported very sharp talons.

And maybe he let his head go intangible, but it wasn’t like he’d ever admit it.

Jake, however, had different ideas. He rapped his knuckles on Danny’s back, yelling, “Look up, bitch, we got mail, too!”

Ah, friendship.

He felt an initial surprise at getting mail through wizard means, since Sam and Tucker were the only people at home who’d know about it. He figured they would tell Jazz about everything, as well as how to reach him through owl mail-

Danny’s eyes blew wide. *Shit, I forgot to tell Jazz about everything.*

“Oh my God, she’s gonna kill me when I get back,” Danny moaned. And after a thought, “Again.”

He didn’t have much time to dwell on the fact, however, as almost immediately he had to yelp and go intangible again when a large box dropped on his head.

“What the hell!” Danny screamed at the parliament of owls that had dropped the parcel, now sitting on the bench inside his transparent body, sending chills up his spine. He floated away from the bench and went solid again behind it, glancing at Jake, whose box had landed on his food in front of him.
Jake raised an eyebrow at Danny. “Wow, they really seem to hate you.”

Grumbling, Danny grabbed the box and hefted it up onto a free spot on the table, initially struggling a bit at how heavy it was. He plopped back down on the seat and inspected the box, which looked to be a normal, cardboard package - hell, there was even a half-scratched out Amazon logo, leading Danny to believe Tucker had probably packed it himself. A smile flitted onto his face. Warmth in his chest.

Jake was already tearing into the tape, using dragon claws to open the package. Danny grabbed the box by its sides, turned it intangible, and lifted it up, revealing what was inside.

“Aw, man,” Jake said softly as he looked into his own package. He picked out a few letters, some of them white while others were stuck with dozens of stickers, and grinned as he held up a bag of candy. While he tore into the candy (not even saving it, the motherfucker, didn’t he know how valuable that was), Danny looked at his own pile.


He read a few of the letters, smiling brightly at the messages. His parents wished him luck at the “internship” and asked him to find some time to call so they could talk, and Jazz told him to keep his head high and to relax as much as possible. She also mentioned how she’d kill him once he’d gotten home for not telling her about magic, but Danny chose to ignore that fact.

Sam and Tucker talked about how they wished him luck, how boring life in Amity was already, and how they were keeping an eye out for Vlad, who so far had done nothing. As for the ghosts, they’d gone up a bit as they realized Danny hadn’t been out in a while, but between all the ghost hunters, they were able to keep up. (*So sit your ghost ass down and don’t come for us, ‘cause we’re doing fine here, thank you very much*, Tucker wrote.) School was slow at the moment but they predicted lots of studying in Danny’s future, and, according to Sam, he no longer had an excuse not to do it, since he wouldn’t be fighting ghosts all the time.

Right, well, she could try, but at this point, the Lord himself would have to descend from the heavens in order to keep Danny from procrastinating.

And anyway, they hadn’t gotten their materials yet, so-

“No no no no,” Jake moaned suddenly. “They sent us textbooks.”

Danny raised his eyebrows in disbelief. He looked at the contents of the box again, and sure enough, beneath all the other gifts were several suspiciously-wrapped parcels - which Danny would find out to be his geometry, history, and chemistry books, as well as several notebooks, folders with worksheets already tucked inside, and a list of learning targets for each class.

*FUCK!* Danny mentally yelled.

“*FUCK!*” Jake yelled out loud, the bastard.

Right, he was no longer in Amity Park among impressionable five-year-olds. He could swear all he wanted.

“What subjects did you get?” Danny asked Jake, who sullenly pushed his pile towards him. Danny barked a laugh. “Oh, you have to do biology. Good luck.”

“You,” Jake said with the beginnings of a cheeky grin, “get to help me.”
“I will not-”

“Oh, look at me,” Jake sighed, “a helpless freshman, unable to study on my own, struggling through unfamiliar territory. If only there were a big, strong, sophomore around who could assist me in my teachings, show me the ways of algebra and biology before it’s too late for my developing brain-”


“And algebra.”

“Long, I will murder you.”

“Looking forward to it,” Jake replied cheerfully, slapping the covers of his textbooks pointedly.

It was then that the subject turned to classes again, leading Neville to recount the Roasting of Dolores Umbridge by Jake and Danny, to which many of the kids began congratulating them, as well as apologizing for how awful she was. Danny, touched, gave them a broad grin with the message that they’d always be happy to help anyone if Umbridge gave them a hard time.

“Who you gonna call?” Jake snickered.

“If you start humming the *Ghostbusters* theme because I’m a ghost, I’m leaving you,” Danny told him.

“I thought you’d appreciate that. It’s a goddamn *pun*.”

“It’s only funny the first hundred times,” Danny said. “Tucker did it *all the time.*”

Of *course* all the muggleborns immediately began singing the *Ghostbusters* theme. Initially, Danny groaned and buried his head in his hands, but after a while joined in as well, suddenly inexplicably happy.

As he looked around at the people singing, the wizards who hadn’t grown up around nonmagicals slightly confused, Jake laughing loudly, Danny realized why.

They didn’t *care.* They didn’t care that he was half-dead, that he made the air cold and could shoot green acid from his fingers; they didn’t care who or what he was because to them, he was just another teenager with a few weird quirks. A teenager which had successfully established himself as approachable and hated Umbridge as much as them. Someone they could *relate* to.

He could *relate* to these kids. He actually had something in common with them.

He and Jake stayed there for the rest of breakfast, singing *Ghostbusters* off key and enjoying the friendliness around them in *a magic school,* and Danny couldn’t help but notice how the smile he wore hurt his cheeks, something that hadn’t happened in what felt like months.

Both he and everyone here were part of a world many didn’t understand, trying their best to survive in a war-ridden Earth, and somehow, they’d all found the silver lining to enjoy themselves as much as they could.

Jake and Danny decided to tag along with the Trio to today’s DADA lesson, if only for the sake of getting it over with. Though Umbridge gave both of them a dirty look when they entered the room
(and really, how could Danny resist flashing his eyes green, if only to see her jump?), but otherwise didn’t acknowledge them.

Jake asked for a textbook again, and like last time, had one flying toward him at the speed of light, which he managed to catch and respond with a cheeky retort. Not long after that, they’d begun reading (or, in their case, Jake huffing in disappointment while Danny stared at the skeleton hanging from the ceiling in boredom).

A few students raised their hands throughout the class, ignored by the teacher. Danny took to watching the class, mind wandering to the secrets Hogwarts had and what it could entail for them.

Jake’s friend, Fu Dog, had yet to get back to them on a spell that could’ve been put on the warding, but Danny had his phone in his pocket in case he chose to call sometime during the day. The representatives hadn’t gone outside to check the border again, and neither particularly felt up to seeing if any of the other wards in the castle had the same effect. Besides, Danny wasn’t sure if he felt comfortable letting Jake near that thing again. He’d had such a strong reaction, and more exposure to it couldn’t be healthy.

Wow, I’m the Mom Friend now, Danny thought with a jolt, suppressing a laugh. He was reminded of Jazz constant nagging, Tucker’s near-force-feeding him lunch, Sam’s lectures on learning to hone his powers in a healthy way. Now, with Jake’s turbulent personality, Danny found himself trying desperately to keeping him from blowing something up. No doubt one of them would snap before the year was over.

Danny looked down at his hands. The warding bothered - Jake too, undoubtedly - him more than he’d like to admit. It was one thing to keep them inside Hogwarts. It was another to keep them inside in such a way that it caused Jake to react like that.

Whatever had happened to him, it’d worn off as soon as he’d calmed down. And if that was a constant, it meant, hopefully, that they may be able to overpower the spell if they stayed calm long enough. If Jake stayed calm long enough. Danny wasn’t sure what would happen if he touched the ward.

He mulled the idea over in his mind. It could work, and if it did, it’d be incredibly useful. If the spell really did depend on the element of surprise, then becoming accustomed to it could make it lose its power. And if they managed that, they’d have a surefire way of leaving Hogwarts should the need arise.

Then came another thought, a voice in his brain which had been nagging at him ever since yesterday: Was it really the Hogwarts professors that put it there? Why would they put something so potentially harmful to keep them in when they knew Danny and Jake were allies? They were teenagers. It wouldn’t be that hard to persuade them to stay, as long as a little guilt-tripping was involved. Maybe a little bribery. Not… not whatever this was.

But if Hogwarts didn’t do it, then who did? The Order? The Ministry?

Danny slid his gaze over to the toad, who was sitting in her desk, glaring at the students.

Nah, he doubted she had the capacity to.

The will, though. Maybe he shouldn’t rule her out completely.

Danny inwardly groaned. He was going to have a headache if he sat on this any longer. Right now, all he wanted to do was fly around the castle, practice his powers, pull some pranks on some
unsuspecting students…

Maybe he’d be able to master duplication while he was here. Danny imagined the expression on Vlad’s face if he did manage that and had to contain a laugh.

Now back to being bored out of his mind, Danny took out his phone and checked his texts from under his desk. (“No fair,” Jake hissed.) He sent a thank you message to Sam and Tucker, as well as Jazz.

The class managed to go maybe fifteen minutes before the bell rang before people began to fidget in their desks, tapping their quills against the table, and sighing loudly. Danny looked at Harry and was amused to see him glaring vehemently at Umbridge, who stared right back with a bit of a nervous frown. Honestly, he’d pay to see a throwdown between them.

He looked like he was going to argue with her about something, but Hermione tugged at his sleeve, a silent warning. Harry sighed, laying his chin on his desk, his hands in his lap, and Danny took the opportunity to try and see what he’d been so adamant to hide during breakfast. Too many people were in his way, however, the shadows too thick, and Danny soon gave up, leaning back in his chair with a bored huff.

“How much time left,” Jake groaned quietly.

“Like, ten minutes,” Danny answered, checking the time once more before stuffing his phone back in his pocket.

“No talking!” Umbridge hissed from the front.

“Jesus Christ,” Jake softly moaned while Danny plastered a grin on his face, calling, “Gotcha, Dolores!”

They didn’t react (albeit a few snorts) to her outraged intake of breath, the class ringing with quiet laughter. Satisfied, Danny put his arms behind his head, closed his eyes, and waited for the class to end.

“I am never,” Jake vowed, “doing that again.”

“I hear ya, Shorty,” Danny sighed, ignoring the grumbles of I’m not that short! “Hey, Harry, mind if we meet up later with you for Care of Magical Creatures today as well? Jake won’t stop talking about firecrabs.”

“Course,” Harry said, walking beside him, Ron on his other side. “Though I don’t think we’ll be looking at firecrabs.”

“Malfoy will be there,” Ron added.

Danny’s lips twitched. “Oh, great, I can mess with him. Jake stole my thunder last time.”

“I will again,” Jake said.

“Not if I do it first!”

Hermione rolled her eyes, brushing a curl out of her eyes as she walked. “Are you two seriously arguing on who gets to pick on Malfoy?”

“It’s a serious issue,” Danny defended.
“We’re only avenging you,” Jake said with a wink, and Hermione laughed.

“Well, come on then,” Ron butt in, voice strangely icy. “Don’t want to be late.”

Jake looked over, noticing the glare from the redhead. Woah, okay, he’s defensive. Wasn’t like was flirting.

Trixie’s voice found its way into his head. Jakey, you’re always flirting. You flirt with anything that moves. It’s kind of weird, actually. A unicorn will not go out with you.

I just have a charming personality! Past-Jake argued.

Well, he could worry about it later.

Danny and Jake parted ways from the Trio to head to the library while they attended Double Potions, determined to find information on possible spells that could be on the border. Of course, being the idiots that they were, they got maybe ten minutes of searching in before messing around and finding overly specific book titles, as Danny and Harry had done back in Diagon Alley. The fact they were allowed in the Restricted Section made it all the more entertaining.

They didn’t stay long, only skimming the titles. Jake found himself nervous to dig deeper, almost as if some great evil were to be uncovered if he continued to search. So they called it a day and wandered the halls, saying hello to the ghosts, until Double Potions was over, where they met the Trio back by the Great Hall.

“After you,” Jake said, bowing with a flourish.

The five of them chatted on the way Care of Magical Creatures, mostly complaining about Umbridge. Harry and Ron lamented about all the essays they were already assigned, each leaning on each other with a hand to their head for maximum dramatic effect. Beside them, Hermione chastised them about procrastinating, but Jake could tell she was having just as much fun as them. Danny listened to them talk, occasionally interjecting to add his own past school experiences.

“At least you don’t have to do geometry,” was a popular sentence. Jake worried he didn’t actually know he had at least six other subjects to work on as well.

They reached Care of Magical Creatures, an area just outside the Forbidden Forest and maybe twenty feet away from Hagrid’s cabin, where Professor Grubbly-Plank stood waiting. Most of the other students had already arrived, and Jake could clearly distinguish Slytherin from Gryffindor, and in a corner underneath a tree, the white-blond hair of one pleasant Draco Malfoy. He wrinkled his nose as if rich, racist snob were a disturbing scent that had wafted towards him.

A few students expressed their concerns over Hagrid not being there, to which Grubbly-Plank (and wow, Jake needed to know her first name, because that was too much of a mouthful) replied in clipped words that he would return soon and any news on his condition was confidential.

Since these students had already been here yesterday, she wasted no time introducing herself, launching directly into the learning targets for this unit and reminding students, as all teachers would be for the rest of the week, of the importance of OWLs. After that, Jake showed more interest as she brought out a box of what looked like green stems of plants, except they moved and crawled about, and he could just make out a pair of beady brown eyes on each of them.

She introduced them as bowtruckles and delved into a lengthy explanation about their origin, talking about Germany and some Scandinavian forests, most of which Jake had to fight to stay awake for. He understood the importance about learning as much as he could while his grandfather
was away, he knew that, but there would always be a part of him that rebelled at the very thought of having to take notes.

They were then passed out among the students, to which Jake and Danny shared with the Trio in order to get a closer look. Danny poked at the leaves, curious, and the bowtruckle stared at him with wide eyes, but made no move to attack.

“They’re peaceful,” Hermione told him, “at least, until someone threatens their home. Do you want to hold one?”

Danny nodded, eyes wide and starry as he allowed the thing to crawl onto his palm. Jake laughed at his shell shocked expression, though had to admit the creature was pretty cute. Maybe they lived in America. Haley would kill to have one as a pet.

Hearing a rather loud bout of laughter off to the side, Jake lifted his head and looked off to where Malfoy and his friends stood around. The Slytherin held an arm of a bowtruckle between his fingers as he dangled it above the ground, sneering as it flailed around, trying to find purchase.

Jake growled, already taking a step forward, but Hermione called out a, “No, look,” prompting him to notice the already furious Grubbly-Plank stomping towards the bunch. He calmed down and watched with a satisfied grin as she chewed Draco out, taking the bowtruckle tenderly from his hands and taking it back to the box.

“Serves him right,” Harry said cheerfully, still close to Danny as he continued to peer at their own bowtruckle. The halfa grinned.

Grubbly-Plank collected the bowtruckles after a few more minutes and proceeded to talk about their diet, to which Jake immediately zoned out and began playing rock-paper-scissors with Danny. The class flew by after that, and soon enough, Jake and Danny had reached the last class of the day, a simple Muggle Studies class that had the both of them reeling by the time it was over.

“I will never look at a shower curtain the same way again,” Danny commented as they made their way to the Great Hall for some food.

They stared at each other for a few seconds before bursting into laughter.

“It’s just-“ Jake wiped tears from his eyes, “-the way she explains it. God, I can’t deal with these guys…”

“A shower curtain!” Danny cackled. “How the hell does she manage to talk about a shower curtain for an hour!”

Through heavy laughter, they managed to put some food in their stomachs before heading to the library again, where they stayed in the non-restricted portion of the room, skimming through different charms.

Three hours later and they’d found nothing; the sky had begun to darken, the room becoming more crowded as students came to study before bed. Jake yawned heavily and closed the current book he’d had open, something about petrifying spells that had to do more with the body than with magical energy, and suggested they call it a night.

The next few days passed by in a blur; Danny and Jake slipped into a routine of waking up early, going to breakfast, attending some boring elective classes to get it out of the way (all while avoiding Umbridge, mind you), spending time in the library, walking around the grounds, eating,
sparring, and going to bed, fitting some school work in there if they were lucky. Though they couldn’t tell any of the wizards of what they were doing about the borders, they allowed themselves to become closer to the Trio, as well as Neville, who’d taken a particular liking to Danny after learning about Sam. The halfa got the distinct impression that kid secretly hoped for her address so he’d have someone to send letters to about whatever new plant he’d found.

Keeper tryouts for Quidditch were on Friday, and for whatever reason, Ron wanted no one to find out. Danny and Jake had watched him practice on the field one evening after a late training session by the Forbidden Forest, and, well… he was good. Not professionally so, obviously, but the way Harry and Ron talked about Quidditch, Danny thought the likelihood of him making the team was rather high.

Harry found out eventually, of course. Him and Danny had been walking down the hall together, the latter of which had decided to keep him company as he walked to the common room after Umbridge’s third detention for the week. Jake had waved him off, yawning, already nearly half asleep after a long day at the library (and no success thus far).

“Ron, that’s brilliant,” Harry said with a grin as his friend shyly told him about the practices. “And no, of course I wouldn’t think it’s stupid, I think it’s great! You’ll be a great addition to the team.”

“You really think so?” Ron asked hopefully.

“I know so,” Harry told him with conviction, turning to Danny.

Danny nodded eagerly, not too keen on letting any of them know he had already seen Ron practice. “We’re rooting for you, man!”

Ron gave him a small smile; he’d certainly warmed up to the representatives in the time they’d spent together, chatting much more openly, though Danny felt like he was still more comfortable around him than Jake. Why, he had no idea.

“Thanks, mates,” Ron said. “Hey, Harry, you finished that report for Potions, didn’t you?”

“Yeah,” Harry sighed, taking his hands out of his pockets and running one through his hair. “Took me a bloody long time, but ‘Mione’s great-“

Whatever Harry said afterwards, Danny didn’t hear. He was too busy staring at the boy’s hand.

The cuts looked recent, bloody, and way too clean to be any normal scratch. Before he could think any more, Danny blurted, “Show me your hand, Harry.”

Harry trailed off from his sentence. “What? Why?” He discreetly tried to put his hand back in his pocket.

In a moment, Danny had seized Harry’s wrist, ignoring the shout and sharp pull, and stared in horror at the cuts on his hand. A sharp intake of breath and he’d dropped it, feeling sick to his stomach.

_I must not tell lies._

“Who did that?” Danny demanded as Ron took a long look at the hand, his face blanched.

Harry glared at the floor. “It doesn’t matter.”

“It bloody well does,” Ron hissed. “Harry, what - why didn’t you say anything?”
“I didn’t want you to worry!” Harry said, a twinge of defensiveness tainting his voice.

Though he could sympathize, Danny knew there was a line to be drawn. And that line entailed a very severe discussion with a certain professor. “Did she do this?”

Harry scowled. “It doesn’t matter. I’ve only got till Friday, then I’m scott-free.”

“Dammit, Potter!” Danny seethed. He felt his core pulse in his chest, sending ice and acid through his veins. “She’s cutting you up. You aren’t even a little bothered by this?”

“Danny’s right,” Ron said. “You’ve got to tell someone.”

“I will not,” Harry insisted. “It’s exactly what she wants. I won’t give her the satisfaction.”

“I think we’re beyond that,” Danny argued. As much as he appreciated spiting authority, this… this was abuse. They couldn’t seriously let this slide.

“Just till Friday,” Harry begged. “Please, don’t tell Dumbledore. If it gets worse, I’ll talk to him. But right now, it’s fine. It barely hurts. Look, the bleeding’s already stopping.”

Bullshit. That thing would scar, Danny was sure of it. He had plenty of personal experience.

In the end, Harry and Ron made their way back to the common room, Danny reluctantly agreeing to hold off on telling anyone until Harry decided he wanted to. That didn’t mean he wouldn’t have a lengthy discussion about it with Jake, though, as well as make Umbridge’s life a living hell.

_Oh my God_, Danny thought as he floated up through the floors and to his room, where no doubt Jake was bored out of his mind without him. _I really am the Mom Friend._

“We have to go back,” Danny said on Thursday night, lying in bed with the lights off.

“Hmm?” Jake struggled to stay awake, mentally thanking whatever deity may exist for the warmth of his covers.

“The border. We have to go back.”

Oh, he was awake, all right.

“Are you insane?” Jake said incredulously. “Uh, no way. Remember what happened last time we went there?”

“You won’t be touching anything, believe me,” Danny reassured him. “Though I do think it loses its power the calmer you feel, but that’s not the point.” He waited a beat. “We need to know what it’ll do to me.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Fu should be gettin’ the results back to us any day now.”

“He doesn’t know anything about me, though,” Danny argued. “The only way to be certain is to test it out ourselves.”

Jake stared at the ceiling, biting his lip. On one hand, he had a point. Better to be prepared, right?

On the other…

“I don’t think-“ His voice cracked a little. “Danny, I dunno how to deal with things like… things
“Like a panic attack?” Danny asked softly. When Jake didn’t answer, he continued, “Don’t worry about me. We have an idea of what may happen, and we know it’ll likely stop if I stay calm.”

“Yeah, but... but what if it’s worse with you? Like, way worse?” Jake let out a frustrated sigh, gathering a fistful of bedsheets in quivering hands. “I’ve never dealt with this sort of thing. I’m used to having my grandpa to help, or Fu, hell, even my sister - I can’t-“ he let out a snarl. “Dammit! We have no idea what we’re doing here, Fenton! We don’t know these people!”

The air, laden with tension, was broken by Danny’s worried, “We can get through this.”

Jake laughed hollowly. “Since when are you the optimist? Honestly, this place is messin’ with our heads.”

Danny let out a breathy laugh. “I’m trying not to think about how much I wanna bash my head against the wall, actually.” A pause. “Look, we can do our normal rounds tomorrow, and I’ll keep an eye on the border. Later, if you want, while you head back, I can check it out-“

“Alright, now you’re trippin’,” Jake cut in. “No way am I leaving you alone, you butt. We’re in this together or not at all.”

He knew Danny was smiling on the other side of the curtain. “‘Butt?’ What, no creative swear words tonight?”

“Oh, fuck off, Fenton.”

Danny laughed. “There he is.” A rustling sounded, leading Jake to envision the halfa turning over in bed. “Good night, Shorty. Let’s hope we don’t die or whatever.”

“Night,” Jake intoned, trying his hardest to fall asleep.

The covers felt like a cage around his body. He threw them off and sighed at the cool air that kissed his bare skin.

Chapter End Notes

danny being a little shit is something i live for tbh

i promise the awful, neverending humor will come back soon i just love hurt/comfort so much khkjhgdjfgy

ALRIGHT SO QUICK DISCLAIMER: i don't remember if the order knew about the prophecy but by researching i kinda figured they did, but i didn't know how much D: so i made it that they understood what it was and they knew what it vaguely said, and wanted to protect harry from it. dumbledore, as always, knows more than them but is being relatively transparent about it. if i got it wrong you can lemme know but i won't change anything in the story cause i already wrote it hhgn
Chapter Summary

no one:

me: so anyways jake cheers danny up and then they hug cause i'm touch starved and love to project

Chapter Notes

HOO BOY BEEN A HOT MINUTE, HUH

sorry for getting this out so late!! i've had half the chapter written for a good few months and never finished it hhghfg,,

didn't get all i wanted to write into this chapter but it was kinda getting too jumbled so i sorted some stuff for next chapter!! i still feel like it's a bit of filler but hopefully it's not too bad, spent a lot of time revising and i think i'm back in the swing of things :)

enjoy! thank you for all the wonderful comments ahhh

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Oh Fuck her,” Jake swore heatedly, dropping Harry’s hand. His eyes shone a glaring red, his lip curled to reveal his sharp teeth bared in a snarl.

Harry shoved his hands in his pocket and looked down at the ground. “It’s fine. It’s already Thursday, I just have to suck it up two more days.”

“You shouldn’t suck anything up!” Jake snarled. “I don’t know what it’s like here with y’all, but in America, if a teacher did this to a students, they’d get fired and probably put in jail!”

“Jake is right, Harry,” Hermione added. She walked next to Ron, whose expression had remained dark and guarded. “You can’t keep this hidden.”

Harry’s eyes flashed dangerously. “Watch me,” he scoffed, picking up the pace to surpass the group, disappearing around the corner.

Danny stared at his back, barely noticing everyone else had stopped. Hermione and Ron gave each other worried looks, and Jake’s glare could burn a hole through a wall.

“I’m gonna kill her,” Jake spat. He flexed his fingers, and Danny noticed pinpricks of red scales rushing beneath the surface of his skin. “I’m gonna wrap my claws around her throat and rip it out, I’m-”

“Jake!” Hermione cut in. Her face had whitened, her eyes wide. “You wouldn’t do that, don’t say that!”
Jake grit his teeth, scratched at his skin, and the scales disappeared. Suddenly he deflated, his shoulders slumping. He looked vulnerable. “Yeah, I know,” he said in an infinitely smaller voice. “I’m sorry. Sorry, I just-” He ran his hands through his hair. “I hate her. How can she get away with this?”

“She won’t,” Danny gasped out. “Trust me, she definitely won’t.”

Danny’s chest had felt tight all last night, carrying well into the morning, and now, he could feel something akin to static buzzing throughout his body. His chest grew cold, his fingers tingled, and he wanted nothing more than to let out a blast of energy and bring fear to those around him.

*Umbridge’s smirk wiped off her face, candles blown out, a freezing wind seeping into the room, frost covering her skin, eyes widening as she began to shake with cold, petrifying her, staring into toxic green eyes, and she won’t be able to hurt anyone ever again because Phantom will keep them safe and her away-*

Horrified at his train of thought, Danny pushed away the voice in his head and shrank into himself. What was he thinking? He wasn’t someone who enjoyed tormenting others, and he certainly wouldn’t use his powers like *that*. He wouldn’t act like the ghosts in Amity Park, who laughed at destruction and fiercely enjoyed making people’s lives a living hell.

But Harry was hurt, and for some reason he refused for people to help him, and wasn’t it Danny’s duty to protect those who needed it, no matter the cost?

*Self-sacrifice, he told himself fiercely. Not at the expense of others. Only of yourself. What the hell are you thinking?*

He glanced down the hall, where Harry had long since disappeared.

*You sound like Vlad. You’re not ruthless.*

Then.

*You sound like Dan.*

“Repressing that,” Danny murmured to himself, inconspicuously shuffling closer to Jake, whose body was warmer than his.

Ron and Hermione said goodbye to them as they made their way into the Great Hall, wearing equal pinched expressions, casting furtive glances towards the Gryffindor table. Jake waved, whereas Danny simply nodded jauntily.

The two of them made their way out the front door and into the light of the morning sun, and a comfortable breeze blew Danny’s hair out of his face for a few moments.

Jake cleared his throat. “So any reason you’re basically rubbing against me like a cat?”

Danny looked down in surprise to see that yes, he’d ended up pressed against Jake’s side. The dragon hadn’t moved away, though he shivered slightly, and Danny felt a flush of guilt as he realized it was probably his lower body temperature that had caused it.

“Sorry,” Danny muttered, beginning to move away, but Jake snorted and linked their arms together.

“Don’t be, Casper,” he said. “What, you cold?”
“Kinda?” Danny wasn’t sure what this was, only that it scared him and made him want to punch something. Preferably another ghost.

“It’s not the first time this has happened,” Jake babbled. “People pushing against me when they’re cold, I mean. My chi is fire-based, which I guess you would’ve known based on my transformations, but… yeah. I’m like a human heater. Trixie and Spud usually keep a hand on my arm during the winter. Especially in New York. It’s cold there, and honestly, I’ve gotten used to avoiding strangers accidentally touchin’ me because I’m warm and it’s like an instinct? I don’t even know, it’s kinda weird, but I’ve gotten used to it, and-”

“Thanks,” Danny interjected, the corners of his mouth twitching. “Human heater. Got it. Weird flex, but okay.”

Jake laughed. “I rambled a bit there, didn’t I?” He pressed himself closer to Danny, who sighed in relief at the flush of warmth that loosened the tight feeling in his chest. “Here, dude, I don’t mind, seriously. Winter is coming, and I’m already anticipatin’ wizards wanting a group hug or somethin’, too. Man, that’ll be wild, huh?”

“Yeah.” Danny looked ahead at the path. They’d already gone some ways away from Hogwarts, now walking along the Black Lake.

“I’m a little confused as to how you feel so cold, though. Your temperature is usually like this, what’s different now?” Jake paused. “Actually, no, I think you may be colder today. It’s warming up now, though. Your ozone-smell-thingy is stronger, too.”

“It is?” Danny swallowed and took a deep breath to ground himself. Jake had mentioned him smelling of ozone and electricity a few times before, but what could he mean by it being stronger now?

Suddenly itching to get rid of the nerves in his body, Danny snuck his arm out of Jake’s and tapped into his (cold, tight) core. “Why are we walking?” he asked the dragon. “C’mon, let’s fly.”

Jake, though he looked at him worriedly, shrugged and assented.

The two boys took to the skies, Jake doing lazy swoops in his dragon form while Danny focused on the ectoplasm humming beneath the surface of his skin. The halfa snorted in frustration and shot a few ectoblasts, blinking in surprise at the relief flooding him as he did so.

He flicked his finger experimentally and started at the abundance of energy that came flying from his fingertips. Nestled in his chest, his core hummed happily, and a nagging thought entered his mind. The overwhelming feeling of wanting to shoot something overtook him.

“Jake,” Danny said, still staring at his hands. “Combat practice.”

The dragon gave him a toothy grin. His chest inflated and out of his maw came a torrent of flames; adrenaline kicking in, Danny dove out of the way, the searing heat spurring him onwards.

Tumbling through the air, he laughed, and took a moment to right himself before firing a rapid sequence of ectoblasts at the dragon, who twisted and turned with practiced ease.

Danny’s fingers shook and his wrists began to ache with all the ectoplasm rushing through his veins. The blasts came out stronger, faster still, until Jake could barely keep up.

“Danny!” Jake yelled as he barely missed a shot to the neck. “Dude, slow down!”
In the back of his mind, Danny tried his best to reign in the power, but it continued to build in his chest; images flashed in front of his eyes. He saw Amity Park overrun by ghosts, he saw buildings collapsing and people screaming, he saw himself rushing to save the day, punching Technus, sucking the Box Ghost into the thermos, evading Skulker for the third time that day. He saw Harry, then Umbridge, and a wave of fierce protectiveness washed over him.

It wasn’t until Jake cried out a second time that Danny forced himself to lower his hands. The dragon’s shoulder had erupted into golden flames, and for a moment, human clothing could be visible. Then it’d been replaced by scales, and Jake descended to the ground, where he changed back into human form. He rolled his shoulder experimentally, his face white.

Oh my God, Danny thought, did I hit him?

He rushed to the ground and let the rings travel up his body to change him into Fenton. Jake had moved his clothes out of the way, and Danny was relieved to see there didn’t seem to be any injuries.

“You shot me,” Jake murmured, meeting Danny’s terrified gaze. “The hell. What’d you shoot me for?”

“I didn’t mean to,” Danny said numbly. “Are you okay-”

Jake took a step back as Danny moved forward. “I’m fine,” he said, and Danny’s eyebrows shot up at the venom in his voice. “My shoulder tingles, is all. But it got rid of the magic in my shoulder for a moment there. I thought I’d lose control of my dragon form.”

Danny realized he’d begun to take rapid breaths. ‘I’m sorry. Ancients, I don’t know what came over me, I just… I don’t-’ He ran a shaky hand through his hair. ‘I’m sorry, Jake. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Jake shoved his hands in his pockets and kicked at the ground. His gaze had softened. “You scared me, Danny.”

Danny bit down hard on his tongue. ‘Don’t be.” Oh, hell, that was barely a mumble. Guilt wracked his body, bringing heat into his otherwise cold chest.

A few moments passed in which the air around Danny felt like it was keeping him in a chokehold. Finally, Jake sighed and took his hands out of his pockets to rest on his hips. He gave the ghost a friendly smile. “That was the fastest I’ve seen you shoot stuff. You’re getting really good.”

Danny let out a shaky laugh, shoulders relaxing. “I honestly don’t know what happened.”

“Does that happen often?” Jake asked, his voice colored only with innocent curiosity.

“No.” Danny flexed his finger experimentally, relieved when only a few small sparks flew out. “I don’t think I have enough time back at home to actually try something like that. Ghosts get in the way.”

Jake nodded uncertainly. A breeze picked up again, and when Danny looked to the sky, he noted the fluffy white clouds becoming thicker by the minute.

“It looked like a lot of built-up energy,” Jake speculated. “But I don’t know how ghost powers work. You may have just been stressed. You didn’t notice how fast your were firing?”

Danny rolled his eyes. “If I knew it was so dangerous, I would’ve stopped, Dragon Breath.”
Jake cocked an eyebrow. “You sure?”

His tone made Danny slightly uncomfortable, scrutinizing him as though accusing him of lying. Danny cleared his throat and looked away. “I feel fine now, in any case. Pent-up energy, like you said. Let’s go.”

He didn’t give the dragon a chance to answer as he turned around and made his way towards the cliffs at a brisk pace.

They walked in silence, neither suggesting flying again. Danny’s phone lay heavy in his pocket, which would sound an alarm once it was half an hour before second period. That way, they’d get back in time and be able to attend their three classes, no problem.

They soon reached the same spot they’d been in a few days earlier. The air felt cooler here, somehow, fresher, and the sun had disappeared behind a large cloud.

Jake stayed back a few feet from where they remembered the ward being, nervousness evident in the way he played with his shirt and shuffled his feet. “You sure about this?” he asked Danny, his voice a few octaves higher than normal.

“Surer than the asteroid that was supposed to hit us back in 2012,” Danny sighed, pushing down his nerves as he took a few steps forward. “Hey, if I die, make sure to carry my corpse back and drop it on Malfoy, ‘kay? I haven’t gotten to mess with him yet.”

Jake made a strangled sound in the back of his throat. “Man, is this your coping mechanism for potentially dangerous situations? Morbid jokes?”

“Hell yeah.” Danny shot Jake a grin over his shoulder. Before he could chicken out, he thrust his hands forward and touched the barrier.

The effect was instantaneous. A sensation not unlike going intangible, numb, traveled up his arms and into his chest, and his core buzzed strangely. Suddenly, heat spiked along the surface of his skin as if he’d stuck it into hot wax, but before Danny could shout and tear his arms away, it had disappeared just as quickly. A warmth grew in his chest until he felt himself near pulled to the ground, as if an anchor had been placed on top of him.

Narrowing his eyes, Danny pushed forward, and the heaviness only increased - however, though he found it harder to keep walking, he hadn’t become frozen like Jake, and the weight was bearable. It seemed as if whatever ward had been placed had less of an effect than it was supposed to, because before he’d known it, the sensation had left and he stood at the very edge of the cliff, one foot already placed on the road leading down to the village.

Danny let out a triumphant shout, punching the air. “Ha! Take that, you stupid magic wall!” He spun around to look at Jake, who stared flabbergasted at the halfa. “Jake! Dude, I made it through!” Danny called.

Jake scowled, opening his mouth to say something - except the sound was all muffled, as though he were speaking through a wall. “Hard to hear,” Danny could eventually make out.

The ghost nodded. “Same here,” he said in a raised voice, exaggeratedly enunciating each syllable so Jake could read his lips.

“Did it hurt?” Jake asked him. Danny shrugged - Not really - and the dragon grinned, shooting him a thumbs up. “Sweet!”
“I’m coming back over,” Danny said. He held his hands out again and braced himself, but raised his eyebrows in surprise at the sensation of walking back. It’d been greatly diminished; the heaviness and rush of heat was still there, but almost unnoticeable; a string of worry made its way into Danny’s head as he realized the ward was, in fact, designed to keep them in.

“This is great,” Jake gushed as Danny stepped back inside the boundaries. “You can come and go whenever you want! Ha!” He spread his arms. “Stupid wizards can’t keep a ghost in!”

Danny’s lips curved into a smug smile. “I think they thought it would work. Evidently I’m stronger than they thought.” Though the fact it had affected him even though his body contained ectoplasm was certainly a point worth pondering.

Jake barked another laugh, practically bouncing on his feet. “Good thing we didn’t tell ‘em about all our powers. Aw, man, they totally underestimated us.”

Danny grinned, Jake’s good mood infectious. It was enough to make him forget about the worrying display of ghostly anger he’d exhibited earlier, of the fact that Jake still couldn’t cross the barrier, and the matter of Harry and Umbridge. As Jake prattled on about “dumbass wizards and their overconfidence,” Danny thought back to what he’d told the Order about his powers.

It really hadn’t been much. He’d talked about his basic ghost powers like flight, invisibility, intangibility, and ectoblasts, but had left out his ability to overshadow people, as well as more obscure powers like duplication and teleportation, both of which he hadn’t yet mastered. His Ghostly Wail wasn’t something he planned on using during the year, anyway, so he kept that to himself, as well as his ice powers and core… though he had admitted to associating himself with the element in some ways after Sirius had inquired about his uncanny temperature.

In hindsight, Danny worried if he’d revealed too much. Despite Clockwork’s promise of protection, he’d always have caution when it came to talking about his ghostly half, and hopefully the information given to the wizards wasn’t enough to build a ward like this. If they really did have malicious intent, even showing his Phantom side might’ve been too much.

Then again…

*You will not have to hide your ghostly half.*

Maybe that’s all this was: a misunderstanding. Maybe if they simply asked Dumbledore, they’d figure out just what the hell was going on.

Then Danny remembered Jake’s response to the ward, and immediately pushed those thoughts from his head. If the wizards were lying to them, he didn’t want to cause them to up their game. Jake shouldn’t have to deal with any more of that.

Inwardly groaning at the questions flying through his head, Danny turned his attention back on Jake and noticed he’d fallen behind as they’d started to walk back. Mentally reminding himself to look into more of the library books on warding magic, he quickened his pace to catch up.

Jake let out a shout as he kicked the dummy across the room. It landed close to the wooden sticks, slumping against the wall as the enchantment that allowed it to punch back wore off. Almost immediately, another took its place, brand new and shiny from the few standing off to the side.

He grinned, jutting his jaw forward to relieve some of the tension from his larger canines lining the
bottom of his mouth. His gums twinged in pain as they grew warm, his tongue splitting down the middle, fire-retardant magic coating the inside of his mouth and throat as he took a deep, shuddering breath. He tightened his throat and his fire-breathing glands rubbed together; in a moment, a space just above his Adam’s apple widened, leading the acrid taste of smoke and heat to fill him for several uncomfortable seconds as he released a plume of fire from his mouth and onto the dummy.

It stumbled back as the fire hit it, holes already being burnt into the surface as the flames licked its rubber body. Jake, feeling an itch in his throat, stopped the fire, blowing out of his nose a couple times to keep himself from inhaling too much smoke into his lungs. He coughed, silently wishing the process was as easy in human form as it was as a dragon.

Just as Jake’s tongue had returned to its human form and the residual fire went out, the dummy charged him with lurching steps and the dragon had to block a punch at the last moment, clumsily realigning his feet while it continued to hit him with some sort of manic fury.

Jake groaned and caught the next punch, pouring some dragon energy into his arm in order to keep his strength up. He was lucky the dummy had about the same strength as an angry goblin.

Jake grabbed the dummy’s shoulder, pulled himself closer, and used his hips to heft it onto his back, where he flipped it on to the mat and barely had enough time to dance away before it threw itself back up onto its feet.

“You’re awful, you know that?” Jake told the dummy. “I regret putting the combat setting up.”

As way of answer, the dummy rushed towards him again and Jake was back on the defensive. As he blocked hits and tried his best to keep his footing, he heard his grandfather’s voice in his mind: *Use all abilities to your advantage. Morals don’t count in a fight, despite what others tell you. If your life is in danger, it is better to defeat your opponent while their back is turned than wait and risk getting hurt worse. Honor is noble and important, but too much of it will only get you killed.*

Jake’s dragon tail whipped out and swept the dummy of its feet. He tried to pin it while it stayed on the ground, but it was back on its feet too quickly. Frustration making his movements more erratic, Jake bounced back and glared at the dummy as they circled each other.

Its shoulder looked badly damaged by the fire, as well as the left side of its face and jaw. Its legs were the strongest part of its body, and though Jake had managed to get it down on the ground, it had no problem with leaping back up and immediately punching him. What was strange was that it never seemed to actually use its legs to kick him.

Jake nearly smacked himself. *Oh, that’s it!*

The dummy ran at him again, but this time, Jake was ready. He stood his ground until the very last moment, and when the fist came flying at him, instead of blocking, he ducked and sidestepped. In a moment, the dummy had turned and begun to land another blow, but Jake pivoted on his heel and delivered a swift roundhouse kick to the dummy’s neck.

It snapped to the side, and the already weak rubber twisted around and broke further as the dummy fell to the ground. Disoriented (if the thing could be disoriented), it took longer to right itself, and Jake fell to its side, where he held it pinned against him, using his tail to wrap around the thing’s legs and hold it further in place. After a few seconds, like it had been spelled to do so, the dummy went limp, pronouncing Jake the victor.

He let himself relax and slumped to the ground next to the charred dummy, gasping for air. His
ankle burned where he’d pivoted too abruptly and his elbow sent sharp spikes of pain up into his 
hand from where he’d hit his funny bone trying to pin the damn thing, but triumph bloomed in his 
chest and kept him elated even as the adrenaline wore off.

“Fenton!” Jake called, still on the ground. “I beat it!”

A muffled reply came from outside the training room and a moment later a disheveled head of 
black hair peaked through. “The strong one?”

“One weaker one that I kicked into the wall…” Jake took a moment to catch his breath as he 
pointed at the first dummy. “And, uh, this one. Strong. Yeah. Beat it, roundhouse kick, thank me 
later.”

Danny sighed. “One-upping me, I see. I can’t get through this math problem. Hey, you look like 
shit, by the way.”

Jake stared, affronted, as Danny moved back out of the training room. “Wait, you-“ He never 
finished the sentences, instead groaning as his ankle throbbed in pain. “Ugh. Casper, can you grab 
a vial of healing potion from my nightstand?”

“Which one?” came the halfa’s voice. “There are, like, three.”

“Colors?”

“Red, blue, and a really gross yellow.”

Jake racked his brain. “Uhh… whichever is shinier.”

“Red is shiny-“

“Except it’s definitely not the red one.”

“I dunno what to tell you, man.”

“Aren’t there labels?”

“Yeah, but they’re in Chinese.”

Jake groaned. “What - the smartass. He knows I can’t read Chinese that well, is he trying to get me 
to study ?”

From the main room, Danny snorted. “How about I just give you some ibuprofen from my bag?”

Jake gave a grunt of acknowledgement, forcing himself to his feet. He winced as he put weight on 
his ankle, but the damage didn’t seem too bad. Hopefully it wasn’t sprained.

He limped toward the bed, where Danny sat, holding out a small bottle full of pills. “Sam made me 
pack some extras in case I end up fighting ghosts,” the halfa explained as Jake gratefully 
swallowed two hundred milligrams.

Jake handed the bottle back to him and turned to his own nightstand, where three different bottles 
stood. He peered at the colors, then took them in his hand and sniffed them each in turn; one 
seemed vaguely familiar. “Yeah, I think it’s the blue one. I’m gonna have to ask Fu, though-”

“Or you could do your Chinese homework-”
“Yo, what you take me for? Productive?”

Danny snorted, closing his geometry book on his lap. “Fair enough. I got maybe two problems done.”

Jake plopped down on his bed, sighing as he stretched his sore muscles. His grandfather had sent him the bottles earlier that morning through owl mail, as well as a parcel from Fu which, once opened, had yielded to a letter and notes on what he could find on the ward. Though it had taken a while to decipher the animal guardian’s messy handwriting, Jake eventually managed to transfer it onto another, neater sheet of paper.

“Fighting clear your mind?”

Jake turned to Danny, meeting his icy gaze. The ghost’s eyes were not so much a clear blue as just plain cold - like icicles in a cave, he thought, as if they belonged to a thing rather than a person. Subconsciously he rubbed his shoulder and shuddered under phantom chills. Finally, he flicked his eyes away. “Nah. Not really.”

“Don’t really feel like going to the library,” Danny muttered. “I did way too much reading and taking notes today.”

Jake let out a long exhale. “You and me both.” He reached towards the nightstand again, grunting, and retrieved the letters. No matter how many times he read through them, they failed to ring any sort of bell in his mind.

Jake,

Hey! Sorry it’s taken so long, my cell broke and they’re repairing it. Anyway, I hope owl mail is good enough to get this to you sooner rather than later.

So, about the barrier. I asked around the Bazaar, went to our local Underworld libraries, and I’ve compiled a list of possible things it could be. I would’ve asked the old man, too, but you know how he is with these issues. He’d probably go alert the Council or something, then we’d really have a problem on our hands. And lots of paperwork. I’d rather just get this done as quickly and cleanly as possible.

Your chi freezing was a big major clue, except you didn’t mention any sort of change in temperature, so I stayed away from elemental magics, which typically affect the manifestation of your powers (which isn’t always a thing, but in your case, fire). It’s also definitely not sphynx hair. You didn’t change back to human form. But, anyway.

Whatever this is, it’s clearly Old Magic - before you used Latin incantations or, in sorcerers’ cases, just rhyming random words charged with power. It’s a kind of magic that was used by the Ancients - you know, the big dragons who weren’t shapeshifters but could still use their chi. Some herb witches still use it today.

A lot of Old Magic relies on soul- or mind-binding powers. Talismans and the like. I’d definitely look into the gemstone moldavite. Its uses and meaning can contribute to what may have happened.

Moldavite relies on the soul, or, in your case, the chi. It draws power from there and can be used to ground people, to balance disturbances, all that meditation mumbo-jumbo. There are rumors of it actually slowing down certain types of magic, drawing energy from it, and I think a high concentration of it could be enough to latch onto your chi and keep it in one place while it
“healed” you. Once you calmed down, it probably let go since you were much more “grounded.”

It can’t have been only that, of course, since it’s impossible to put pure gemstone powers into a New Magic ward. I asked around the potion-making community and here are a few ideas:

The Captivus Essence, or Prisoner’s Curse, is designed to latch onto someone’s soul and keep them trapped in an area, kind of like how some ghosts can’t leave their haunts. Though I’m not sure if it can be used in a border, and from the way you described it, I’m guessing you could get through if you just kept calm long enough.

There’s a wizard’s spell, Protego Totalum, that’s used for protection in wards, and I’m guessing that’s part of what they use for the border. I’d say with the way these wizards work, it’s extended into the real culprit. So I’d look into that particular spell and what other protection spells there are. You’re not human, they probably have loads for you.

I thought there could be something with how the D.C. takes chi for suspensions? Some dragons have talked about there being a moment of paralysis for them. I don’t think wizards would have the necessary amount of power for that, but you can never be too sure. Anyway, that spell is entirely reliant on Old Magic and using your core or chi. No words spoken.

There’s also a potion called the Anchoring Potion, similar to the Prisoner’s Curse, but it’s used only with DNA instead of cores. Also, you have to ingest it. So unless you had something slipped into your drink, I would rule that out. Still - be careful with what you eat from now on.

Again, keep moldavite in mind. The caster of the spell, if it is a spell, might wear a charm of it.

I’m sure there’s more, these are just what I could find. Keep looking in the library, and don’t be afraid to dig a little deeper, but don’t let anyone know what you’re looking for.

You don’t know who you can trust.

See you this Christmas, if you can leave. The folks say you can bring Danny, too, if you want.

Fu

PS: Tell McGonagall Lao Shi says hi. Apparently they’ve met before??

PPS: I really hope they haven’t been screwing.

Though the letter was packed with information, it was just that: information. Information which, to some extent, they’d already found. It didn’t give any concrete ideas, only further evidence to help along their search.

Maybe he shouldn’t really be complaining all too much; aside from the absolutely awful last sentence, the letter had definitely shed some light on their situation. Jake had read stuff about protection spells while researching in the library, though he agreed with Fu on it having to be an extension, since the spell on its own wouldn’t have been able to do anything.

And even if he wasn’t human, being a shapeshifter would still make it difficult to pinpoint specific parts of him to enchant. Despite having only two primary forms, his chi did have the capability to manifest itself into many different bodies. He just needed a little extra help to tap into the power, and it was highly unpredictable and difficult to control. But it was there, so his point stood.

Jake sighed and tossed the letter back onto the nightstand. They’d been here, what, almost two weeks now? A week and two, three days? And apart from the occasional squabble with a teacher,
nothing much had happened - nothing worth of note, anyway. Harry had finally gotten out of his detention, though that likely wouldn’t last. Umbridge was as unpleasant as ever. They knew Danny could get through the barrier, if not slowly; they knew Jake might be able to as well, if he were actually willing to practice.

He scowled. Why had it affected him so much? He wasn’t that sensitive; wasn’t that easily frightened. He was reckless, he knew that, and he’d been told multiple times to just let things go, but this… this was something else. This had attacked his soul, essentially, and it had left him feeling vulnerable and violated for hours later.

Jake rolled over in bed to face Danny, who was staring intently at his phone. “Yo,” the dragon said, “what time is it?”

“Uh, almost seven thirty. Dinner should be ending about now.”

They’d grabbed something to eat early on, not really in the mood to mingle. Taking some food back to the Room of Requirement had been easy and certainly more enjoyable than stale pop tarts and decaffeinated coffee. And the dried apricots being served were to die for - why Jake had a sudden affinity for dried apricots, he would never know.

So most of the students would be in their common rooms by now, maybe the library. Jake groaned at the prospect of studying the barrier even further, but with almost everyone gone, it would be difficult to actually do something nice, unless they were to fly around in the darkening sky. With his muscles still sore, he wasn’t quite sure if he was ready for even more training that day. Especially after Danny’s outbreak.

“Where are the common rooms?” Jake asked. “Maybe we could hang out with the trio in there.”

“Dunno.” Danny shrugged and put his phone away. “Are we even allowed in them?”

Jake cocked an eyebrow. “You follow the rules?”

The ghost stared at him for a moment, then threw his head back and laughed. “Aw, rich. I’m so bored, I actually did homework. Besides-” his grin faltered a bit, “-the wizards haven’t really warranted our cooperation and trust lately.”

“Oh, tea-”

“Never say that again. It’s so weird hearing that in a New Yorker accent-”

Jake snorted. “Trixie’s rubbed off on me, I guess. And anyway, my accent ain’t that strong.”

“I’m being dramatic,” Danny snickered, then let his head fall against the backboard of the bed. “Not that it’s possible to be anywhere near as dramatic as you, but, y’know, we’ll get there.”

Jake let out a laugh, flopping back onto his back. The two lay in comfortably silence for a few moments longer - Jake’s mind wandering away from the castle and to the city hundreds of miles away, across the ocean, to his home in New York… Wonder what Trixie and Spud are doing now… and Rose… haven’t talked to her in ages…

“Any new leads on the ward?” Danny asked, his tone light, though it was still fairly easy to pick up on the underlying apprehension.

Jake picked at his shirt. “Nah. I don’t know what to do.” He sighed. “It’s just…”
“Frustrating?” Danny suggested. At Jake’s grunt, he let out a breathy laugh. “Dude, I know frustrating. Y’know those days when you feel like nothing’s ever gonna turn out okay? No idea where to go, like whatever you do, it’s just gonna blow up in your face?”

“Don’t get too heavy on me,” Jake joked. “Remember, you’re talking to a near-narcissist.”

“Near-narcissist?” Danny shook his head. “Moving past that, I’m serious, Jake. The frustration, it’s only gonna build. We gotta figure out this ward.”

“Ya think I don’t know that?”

“What if it’s bigger than we think?” he insisted. “What if they strengthen it - what if, in a week, even I won’t be able to get through it, or it’ll start affecting you even without touching it? What if you come into contact with it again and it has a worse effect? What if-”

“You’re being paranoid,” Jake snapped, shooting up in his bed. Meeting Danny’s blazing glare, however, sombered his mood. “Ugh, sorry, I’m.” A frustrated growl in the back of his throat. “We can’t keep thinking about all the things that go wrong. Who knows, maybe this is all just a misunderstanding, didn’t you mention something like that, anyway? And the wizards weren’t even the ones that put it up… if we just talked to them about it, maybe they could help-”

“You’re kidding, right?” Danny swung his legs over the edge of the bed, held Jake’s uncertain gaze with his own icy one. “Jake. These aren’t our friends. We can’t trust them.”

Jake paused for a moment. “Hermione and Harry and Ron are-”

“What? Our friends?” Danny let out a disbelieving laugh. “Sorry to break it to you, but as friendly as they are, we don’t… we don’t know them. We don’t-” He rubbed the back of his neck, something Jake had picked up on being a nervous tick. “I like them,” he said. “I like them a lot. But I also know the people closest to you can turn out to be your worst enemy.” A beat. “It sucks. Call me paranoid. But it’s life. Or,” he added with a humorless laugh, “the afterlife. You tend to learn a thing or two about human behavior after being dead for over a year.”

“You’re naive and hopeful, young one,” said Lao Shi, “and as wonderful it can be when it comes to diplomacy, it can also be your greatest downfall. The hardest lesson you must learn is that with all the power you possess, you still should never, under any circumstances, assume yourself invincible. Even a god can fall to the hands of those he used to trust, if he gives them enough wiggle room.”

“But what do I know?” Danny mused. “I’m not a magical protector or anything. I’ve learned to fight with my fists. Hell, my parents don’t know the thing they hate the most lives the closest to them.”

It wasn’t often Danny opened up about his life back in Amity Park, as Jake had figured out quickly enough. Apart from the game of twenty questions a few weeks back, the only things he talked about were the ghosts he fought and relatively surface-level stuff about his social life, like who his friends were and how school was going, which teachers annoyed him the most and how often they gave him detention.

Jake didn’t pretend to know he understood everything Danny went through back at home, but from what he’d heard about the Fenton parents, he knew the halfa held some semblance of respect towards them, and maybe - as awful as it sounded - a bit of fear. Having parents who hunted down the most important part of you couldn’t possibly sit well with someone, and having to live with that for over a year… Jake was just glad Danny had such a good support system, from what he knew
about his friends and older sister.

Danny was… he wasn’t necessarily mean, but he certainly had a more negative outlook on life and the people around him, like he was just waiting for someone to pull a trigger. And while it was definitely understandable given his circumstances, it gave him an air of always being on edge, something much more palpable when his jokes and teasing increased; it was a coping mechanism. Healthy? Debatable, but Jake would take that over outright violence. It was the pent up energy he was worried about - he didn’t know much about ghosts, granted, but there was talk of obsessions. Of urges and feelings of responsibility that didn’t have too much credibility to them, but were nevertheless something that Jake figured he shouldn’t forget.

Either way, Jake was glad he’d met Danny. As opposite as their reactions to people were, he finally felt like he’d met a kindred spirit. Danny understood the highs and lows of keeping power like they had a secret, and it made staying in Hogwarts a little more bearable.

The dragon smiled a bit as he remembered his initial feelings about having to spend a year around wizards. He’d been angry, confused, and had promised himself he wouldn’t enjoy it. Then Danny had shown up, shown interest in his side of the story, and, as nihilistic as the boy could be, helped him come out of his comfort zone in a castle full of the people he was most annoyed by. He’d made friends here.

He was sure Danny knew it, too. Danny wasn’t that good a liar - he enjoyed being here, in Hogwarts, as much as one could regarding their circumstances. Maybe the ghost was paranoid, or maybe he really did have a point… but the times when he’d laugh along to a joke a wizard said at breakfast, when the shadows in his eyes were wiped away for a moment to make way for a spark of life Jake never really thought he’d see in the halfa…

Danny wanted to trust them. Jake did, sort of, and maybe it really was him being too naive, but Gramps had never told him to keep your friends close and your enemies closer.

Lao Shi had always told him to treat his enemies as his friends until they gave him a true reason not to. Do not trust easily, he’d say, but do not shut everyone out. Let your friends in. Build an army. Find the balance between naivety and wisdom.

It had seemed, at the time, an impossible task; now, however, Jake felt he was up to the challenge.

Danny had lots to think about, he realized.

He had realized a while ago that not everything was as it seems. Not everything could be as perfect as he wanted to be, as straightforward, transparent ( heh ), or anything else that could produce some clarity. If he wanted something, he’d have to work for it, or it would blow up in his face. The CATs in particular taught him that early on.

Hogwarts had seemed like the perfect escape into a different world, a world where he wouldn’t have to worry about ghosts or school, only about the different cultures of the people he’d never known existed. Almost too good to be true, but he’d believed it.

And, of course, it did blow up in his face. There was a ward. And since the only truly dangerous magic here could be committed by wizards, what was he supposed to think? Maybe it really was all a misunderstanding, like he’d previously thought and as Jake had said now. He really didn’t know at this point. He knew Jake couldn’t get through but he could. He knew they weren’t any closer to
figuring things out now compared to when they’d first learned of the barrier.

Maybe he was being dramatic, but it just felt… wrong, and especially tiring, that the one time he thought something would go right, it had instead gone to shit. As always, right?

Jake was always so optimistic, believing himself nearly invincible. The only times Danny had seen him really annoyed were when learning of more injustices towards magical creatures, and even then he eventually shut up and powered through it. That’s what was expected of him as a diplomat. No doubt he’d had trouble with it in the past, but he seemed to be getting better.

And Danny… Ancients, he wanted nothing more than to disappear into the crowd and let himself be swept away by all the jokes and magic. Lately, though, it seemed the jokes were used to mask a deeper scar across the school, and the magic only enforced it. What was really going on at Hogwarts, and what did it have to do with him and Jake?

The worst part was that he really did enjoy it here, could even relate to many of the kids here. It was just hard, he guessed, to be totally comfortable when the one thing he hoped wouldn’t go wrong did. And he was supposed to keep going as usual.

Along with the questions on whether or not Dumbledore knew about the ward came much heavier ones: Did the students know, too? Were Hermione, Ron, and Harry really their friends?

And the thought made his heart crawl into his throat, both with guilt and disgust - because, hey, they’re your friends, dumbass, you can’t seriously think that, but also… if it were true, and Danny didn’t see it, what did that make him? How ready was he really for the world he had so readily immersed himself in? Because, as abrupt as the trip to Scotland had been, he’d fallen into a routine. He’d gotten used to this. To magic. To Hogwarts.

Was he really willing to let that all go?

Through his musings, he caught Jake smile a little. A larger canine of his poked up from his bottom lip. His green hair was messy and stuck up more than usual, stray strands falling into his forehead.

“Do you really think they’d do that?” Jake asked him. “The trio?”

Danny didn’t answer. No. Yes? I don’t know? I don’t know them. I thought I did. But I also thought I’d known Valerie, and Danielle when I met her. My parents.

“Hermione might be able to help with the ward,” Jake continued. “She’s smart. Really smart.”

Danny bit back the urge to reply with a tease - something along the lines of, What, Long, got a crush? Don’t you think she’s a little tall for you? “I don’t know,” he said instead.

“Well, we gotta think of something. We’re no good on our own. We’re dumbasses, in case you haven’t noticed.”

Danny had to laugh at that, at least a little. Jake’s grin was infectious. Annoyingly so. “Yeah, I guess we are.” He dropped his head into his hands. “Argh. I’m so stupid. Sorry.”

“Yo. What you apologizin’ for?”

“I don’t know.” A laugh - incredulous, disbelieving of their situation. “Jesus Christ. I can’t believe myself. Shit, I’m in a magic school, thousands of miles away from home, and I still can’t stop letting Amity influence my choices. Ghosts aren’t even dangerous here. Fuck.”
“Did the swearing feel good?”

Danny peeked out from his fingers. “A little. Damn.”

“Oh, come on, you can do better than that.”

“Is this how you relieve stress? Punching things and swearing? I think my jokes are a better coping mechanism than that.” A beat. “God-fucking-darn it. I hate this so much.”

Jake gave him a sort of half grin, half grimace. He rolled out of the bed and took the few steps towards Danny’s, plopping down next to him. He lay a head on Danny’s shoulder and murmured, “Oh, thank Christ, it’s so much cooler here.”

Danny laughed and leaned into the dragon. “You’re an idiot, Jake, but I’m glad you’re here with me.”

“Yeah, ‘cause without me you’d be angsting all over the place. Blegh.”

The two friends stayed there for a few moments longer, silent, and Danny began to breathe in tune with Jake - suck in some air, hold it for a moment, let it out slowly. Incredibly, his anxiety seemed to crawl back, and calm began to wash over him. Jake’s body was comfortably warm against his side, and, finally, he relaxed.

“Oh, finally.”

“Shut up,” Danny muttered, leaning his head against Jake’s. “Do all dragons have some sort of calming power?”

“Not that I know of, but maybe I should get that checked. This is, what, the third time this happened? Not that I’m complaining.”

“Haven’t breathed like this in a while.”

“’Aight, edgelord.”

“I will freeze you in an ice cube.”

“Dude! You’re begging me to call you, like, Elsa, or something. Honestly.” Jake snickered.

Danny grinned and rolled his eyes. Inexplicably, His chest rose and fell. What a strange ghost he was. “Hey, sorry for being so paranoid.”

“Nah. Don’t apologize.” Jake sighed. “You’re probably right.”

“No. No, I’m definitely not right,” Danny argued. “We can’t do this alone, like you said. We need help. Hermione might be our best bet.”

“And if you were right about them being in on it?”

“Well.” He scrunched up his nose. “We’re supposed to be in charge anyway, remember? And I’m sure that - well, I just hope Clockwork knows what he’s doing. Hopefully everything should turn out all right.”

Jake gasped, taking his head off Danny’s shoulder. “Do mine ears deceive me?” he shouted in a rather awful British accent. “Was that… nay, can’t be… did Sir Phantom just say something positive?”
“Y’know, I’m really not that cynical-”

“My guy, you literally told me the other day that making you learn history shouldn’t be legal because you’re dead and it’s ’not your responsibility’ to know about human pasts anymore ‘cause it’s ’not your fault’ if we all fuck ourselves over.”

“Okay, listen-” But it was too late; Jake was already in stitches, and Danny soon followed.

Fu Dog’s note lay forgotten on the nightstand, and would remain so for however long it took the two to finally get to bed. In the meantime, Danny let himself, finally, be swallowed up by genuine jokes as Jake regaled him with tales of pranks he pulled back in New York, leading to their near-daily routine of possible schemes for the year at Hogwarts.

Chapter End Notes

lmaooo i’m posting this literally five minutes after midnight aka five minutes after april fools day ends,,

uGH i needed to write a danny chapter. this kid is so hard to write so the practice is good. poor lil guy, good thing jake's there to slap some positivity into him :’)

(i wish i had a jake to slap some positivity into me)

i've been getting a bunch of comments on the headcanons of like how the worlds blend together (on ao3 and FFN) and i just wanted to say yes!! keep them coming!!! i love reading your ideas and answering your questions!! this fic is so much fun to write and i'm glad people are enjoying it!! thanks so much dkfdsjf

this one was kinda angsty lmao - next chapter has some more fun/lighthearted scenes which i've been really excited to write since like, chapter two, so y'all definitely won't have to wait another four months for the next chapter lol

(that's a promise. hold me to that. you're legally obligated to yell at me if i don't update. find me on tumblr and throw some hands, cowards)

i hope everyone has an amazing day and don't forget to take care of yourself!!
it's just a prank bro

Chapter Summary

misplaced aggression where ya at

Chapter Notes

EVERYTHINGSPITEFUL -> DIPPINGDOTS

note to self: don't make update promises. jesus fucking christ i am so sorry lmao

i at least got a reason this time!! im not gonna get too much into it but basically school picked up, then we went on vacation, and i meant on uploading this sometime last august but my mental health took a dip and made it hard to get rly anything done besides what i could do for school :) however i was given one (1) molecule of serotonin and fuckin,, speedwrote as much as i could before collapsing lmfao

anyway, i FINALLY added a more lighthearted pranking chapter cause i think we all need it lmfao enjoy!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sessions in the library over the next few days grew few and far between as Jake and Danny forced themselves to mingle with the wizards more. We’re gonna have a miserable time here if we distance ourselves from everyone, was Jake’s reasoning, especially if we’re not even sure yet what the wards are actually doin’ there.

And, sure, he had a point, but Danny was going to be grumpy about it, anyway. Crowds and making friends weren’t exactly his strong suit - that was the dragon’s thing, what he thrived off of. Attention.

At least Harry, Ron, and Hermione hadn’t taken their sudden distance too seriously and welcomed them back to the conversations over breakfast. Their ringing laughter and attempts to include the two diplomats soon washed away most of Danny’s anxieties, and the half-ghost found himself joining in on the banter before breakfast was over.

The five of them (Jake clinging to Danny like a child to their mother, the latter of which was by now used to all the contact, and even the unusual warmth Jake’s body radiated) made their way to the first class of the day, Jake and Danny parting ways with them once they had reached the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, neither in the mood for Umbridge’s antics. They had heard her trampling up and down the hall that morning, muttering to herself about Ministries and Potter and That bloody Malfoy. In short, politics, which the two had no interest in despite being there for diplomacy in the first place.

“I think she’s gonna snap if we go to one more of her classes, what with how stressed she’s been lately,” Jake remarked one afternoon, standing underneath a tree for shade in the sweltering heat.
Danny watched the Care of Magical Creatures class scream as some beast reared its head at the front; he was too far away from the crowd to make out any details, and remained glad of the fact. “I heard her yelling at someone in her fireplace the other day in her office,” he murmured, watching with a small, amused smile as one of the Slytherins broke away from the class and began pacing several feet away, clearly agitated from whatever was in the center.

Jake raised an eyebrow. “And how do y’know that? Seein’ as how, like, we’re not allowed in her office.”

“I got ghost powers,” Danny snickered. “And insomnia. You really think I’m gonna be in the room all night when I’m bored?”

Jake threw his head back and cackled, smacking Danny on his shoulder. His grip lingered there longer than it would have a few weeks ago, back when he would have shouted *Fuck, that’s cold!* and spent the next ten minutes complaining about how ghosts really needed to invest in better homeostasis (*homeostasis* pronounced incorrectly, because Jake had just learned it in his biology book and probably didn’t even totally know what it meant yet).

“So?” Jake asked. “What was she doin’?”

“Agh.” Danny leaned back into the tree, staring thoughtfully at the browning leaves above. Autumn was coming much later into the year than he had expected, but maybe that was just an Illinois thing. It usually snowed around November and didn’t let up until May. “I dunno, I was only there for about a minute. She was muttering at these letters she was reading. Played with a penchant around her neck. Anyways, she waddled over to this fireplace and a guy’s head appeared in there and she yelled at it for a solid thirty seconds.”

“What was she yellin’ about? C’mon, dude, details.”

“Something about *inquisitiing*. I dunno. Something about the Ministry. Power. It got boring after spit started flying from her mouth and I couldn’t make anything else out. It was just babbling, basically. The poor guy in the fire looked like he was gonna shit himself.”

Jake nodded sagely. “Oh, she’s at the end of her rope, all right.”

Danny grinned deviously, blue eyes sidling back up to the class they were supposed to be watching. “Wonder what it took for her to yell that much though, huh? We haven’t been in her class for a while now, and I know Harry’s actually stayed out of trouble, which is unlike him, but y’know, props.”


Danny clapped his hands together, then launched himself away from the tree. He hooked an arm around Jake’s neck and ruffled his hair, ignoring the boy’s indignant shouts in favor of shouting, “*Look out, Hogwarts, we’re coming!*”

“I hate being short,” Jake moaned as he allowed himself to be pulled along by Danny.

They spent the rest of the day in hushed whispers, shirking their responsibilities in favor of plotting and planning. Danny was in a considerably better mood than the past few days, eyes shining with mischief every time he ducked his head to speak with Jake in a low voice.

“Y’know what my absolute *favorite* thing about ghost powers is?” Danny sang as the two sat in the library together one day. The halfa had barely read any books on magic, and his textbooks from
“Enlighten me,” Jake drawled, idly flipping through a page on magic frogs. He had given up on the wards at that point in the day, instead choosing to humor himself with pictures of magical creatures that most resembled the pink toad in their school.

Danny gave him a wicked grin. “The confusion. The drama. Shouting BOO! Is effective, sure, but you know what’s even more satisfying? Invisibly holding a bell behind someone’s ear and watching as they try to find out where the ringing is coming from.”

Jake snorted. “You’re in a really good mood, huh.”

“You know it,” Danny said. “And it’s only gonna get better in an hour.”

Jake felt a grin crawl across his face. Danny’s proposition after they had headed back inside was the only thing he’d been able to think about. They shirked their responsibilities on going into classes in favor of finding out exactly how they could put their powers to good use, bringing some light into their otherwise routine day.

Maybe they could get the trio in on it. Or Fred and George—those two were big on pranks, too, weren’t they?

Jake yawned and put the book down, then stood up to walk the isle of bookshelves. Weeks here and nothing—nothing except for the odd lead here and there, none of which truly led anywhere.

They had received a letter from the Order a few days ago letting the pair know to keep an eye out for any severe Ministry interference. *We have reason to believe they’re closing in on Dumbledore,* wrote Kingsley, *and Fudge has expressed his concerns over a possible rebellion involving the professor.*

Along with the warning came a reminder to keep teaching the students about ghost and dragon culture, which they hadn’t really gotten around to, something Jake felt absolutely no guilt towards. Did he care what the wizards knew about him? No. Was he going to talk their ears off about an ancient race he himself had no particular interest in despite being part of said race? Also no. Would he explain if they asked? In as little detail as possible, but, preferably, no.

(“Doing the bare minimum,” Jake once declared while lying spread-eagled on the bed one night, “is the best feeling in the world. You accomplish everything you need to do with the least amount of effort, and no one can criticize you for it because you technically did your job.”

Danny replied to that with something that vaguely resembled, “Amen to that,” though it could’ve also been him telling Jake to shut up and let him sleep.)

Jake was so lost in his musings, he didn’t realize he had walked into someone until they were both sprawling on top of each other on the ground.

“Jesus—sorry, my bad, yo—“ Jake fumbled around for purchase. As he pulled himself up, he helped the person he’d bumped into up as well. He blinked. “‘Mione!”

Hermione blew a strand of curly hair out of her face. She grinned sheepishly up at him. “Hello, Jake. Sorry, I wasn’t paying attention to where I was going.”

“Yeah, well, me neither, so I guess we’re even,” Jake laughed, eyeing the books she bent down to gather from the ground. “What’s that?” he asked, pointing to a particularly thick leather-bound book. Though she attempted to cover it with her hand, he could make out a distinctly shaped skull
on the cover. Familiar.

“This? Oh—“ she laughed a little and hefted the books under her arm, effectively cutting off the cover he had recognized. “Just some light reading.”

Jake raised a brow. “Uh huh.”

Evidently, his reaction hadn’t been the right one. Hermione frowned, and she took a few steps back. “Either way,” she started, “I should get going. Lunch only lasts so long.”

Surprise shot through him. “It’s lunchtime?”

“Yes.” Hermione narrowed her eyes. “How long have you two been down here?”

“Uh…”

“What is it you’ve been doing, anyway?” she asked curiously. “I know it’s not because you like reading. And you always go to the same sections about protection spells.”

Jake shrugged, trying to ignore the nervousness flitting through him. Though he had had a small acting course for his dragon training and much experience with getting out of tough situations, lying still wasn’t his strong suit. And there was the way her large brown eyes dug imploringly into his, leaving his foot tapping out the nervous energy that had overcome him.

“Just, y’know,” Jake said, plastering a grin onto his face, “doin’ some light reading.”

Hermione rolled her eyes at that. She looked like she wanted to push the subject, but at that moment, Danny decided to step in—noiseless footsteps led him to stand next to Hermione, and a soft, “Hey,” had her jumping a good foot into the air with a strangled scream leaving her throat.

Ignoring the librarian’s Shh!, the three of them bent down to help her pick up her books again, Danny muttering a quick apology, though his lips had quirked to show he had likely meant to startle someone. Luckily, Jake had become used to his antics and barely flinched.

The leather-bound book lay face up on the floor. He grabbed it before Hermione could and studied its cover art with a curled lip. His stomach churned and his heart dropped, fingers shaking a little as he opened it up to the first few pages.

“Jake—“ Hermione started.

“This is a fucking Huntsclan book,” Jake snapped, shuttling the book again before he could read any more. The dragon skull art on the cover grinned up at him, dark green and bringing less-than-welcome memories to light. “Where did you get this?” he demanded, taking a step towards Hermione.

Unease flickered in her eyes as she took a step back. “I found it in—wait, what is it? What’s so important? What’s the Huntsclan?”

Jake started at her incredulously. “You serious?” He turned to Danny, who was watching all this with slight discomfort, fidgeting awkwardly. “Is she serious?”

“What’s the Huntsclan?” Hermione asked again.

Jake’s grip tightened on the book. “They were a group of dragonslayers. Well, they, uh, hunted more than just dragons, but dragons were their main focus. Their logo is on this book, right
underneath the dragon skull.” He took a deep breath to calm his nerves. “I thought you’d know about ‘em. They’re kinda infamous.”

Danny put a hand on his shoulder. Its chill was strangely comforting. “Jake, you good?”

“Fine,” Jake muttered. The Huntsclan wasn’t something he particularly **liked** to remember; they had hunted him throughout most of middle school, after all, and ignoring the fact that his sort-of-ex used to be one of them, their capes and staffs and **skulls** had made more than enough appearances in his nightmares.

Hermione looked stricken. “Jake… I had no idea. I’m so sorry. I… I can put it back where I got it from—"

“Where **did** you get it from?” Danny asked, prying the book from Jake’s whitened knuckles. He rubbed soothing circles into the dragon’s back while talking as if on autopilot.

Hermione hesitated a moment. “Umbridge’s desk,” she finally admitted. “Well, I didn’t take it, Harry did. Was supposed to give her a note of some sort and saw it on her desk. He thought it looked like a dragon skull and took it, and I was going to ask you about it later, but I wasn’t sure how well it would go since it’s not **our** book and I don’t really want it getting out he stole it and—"

“I got it,” Jake interrupted. Seething, he added, “we’ll take the book. Burn it.”

Danny’s hand motions stilled. “Huh?”

“I don’t want that in her hands, whatever reason she had for it,” Jake snarled, taking the book again from Danny and tucking it under his arm, trying to ignore the fact that it had once belonged to a Huntsclan member and likely held ways to kill his own kind between its pages. “I’ll burn it. And then,” he said, voice rising so much the librarian let out another shush from across the room, “then, Fenton, you and I are gonna go absolutely **ham** on that racist piece of shit.”


“Should I be worried?” Hermione asked dryly.

“Three, two…” Jake held his hand up. “Hold…"

“You’re killing me here,” Danny complained invisibly from above. A snort. “**Killing. Ha.** Get it? ‘Cause I’m—“

“‘Cause you’re dead?” Jake guessed. “Wow, what an original joke. I’m wheezing.”

“At this point bad puns is my brand—“

“Three,” Jake hissed, then, as he felt a shift in the cold above him, hastily, “no, dumbass, not yet!”

**You said three!**”

“It’s one, two, three, go —“

“How the fresh hell am I supposed to know that—“

**Go!**” Jake whisper-screamed and scrambled to his feet. He brushed out the wrinkles in his jacket and spun widely around the corner, intentionally bumping into the figure that had been walking towards him. The wall of grotesque pink assaulted his eyes, but he didn’t let his disgust ruin the
moment. As he pretended to scramble for purchase, he leaned into the toad a bit further, who
finally seemed to lose some of her balance. She let a cry of outrage as Jake muttered, “So sorry,
ma’am, I’m so clumsy, oh no, there I go-”

Now she was trying to get around him, but in an act of tragic teenage clumsiness, he tripped over
his own two feet, stumbled a bit to the side, and as she leaned away and took a step, stuck out his
ankle for her to catch her (ugly-ass) shoe on.

Of course, not because it was particularly necessarily but rather because of the simple reason that
Jake was dramatic by nature, he let out another apology, tried to grab her shoulders to steady her,
only to miss - God, so unlucky, he really was such a klutz, huh - and accidentally push her further
into the line of fire.

Now positively disoriented, embarrassed, and, by the transitive property of equality (Jake was
learning that in his math course now and honestly had no idea what it meant), incredibly furious,
she tried to turn on her attacker, only to find a crowd of bewildered, snickering students coming out
of their latest class. Purple in the face, she was too busy yelling at those who were roaring with
laughter to notice the very reason they were: not her tumble into the corridor, but the gigantic toad
suspended invisibly above her head, the same shade of purple and red as her face.

It lowered…

And lowered…

And lifted again, because Danny really wasn’t that cruel to let her take her frustrations out on a
poor toad they had borrowed from one of the first years. Instead, a handful of floating ice cubes
materialized into the air and dropped like stones onto her neck - she screamed at the sensation,
jumping into the air and whirling around to find her attacker, only to watch in dismay as three
whole cubes of ice fell through her shirt and onto the concrete ground.

The student body laughed. Umbridge pointed a finger at them, tried to single out the ones who had
humiliated her. Jake, safely concealed in the crowd, gave the still-floating toad a wink.

“I still think the whole tripping thing was entirely unnecessary,” Hermione drawled over their
shoulders, causing Jake to yelp and Danny to reflexively shoot his head up in the air.

“Maybe so, but I think I deserved some payback,” Jake shot back, closing his library book on
magical historical figures named after rune stones (he wasn’t even trying anymore at this point),
“and anyway, I shoulda gotten an Oscar for that performance, yo. Thank God for Gee giving me
acting lessons.”


“And didn’t let her see my face, which is why she couldn’t get any real proof I had done it, and
changed my voice to sound higher and more pitiful, which is so not me.”

“You have a high voice.”

“It’s not pitiful.”

“I dunno, when you get going about your homework it gets pretty close-”

“Says you, Mr. I Can’t Live Without Caffeine And Astrology-”
Hermione interrupted their bickering with a cough and a pointed look. She sat down next to Jake in the spare chair, looked around as if anybody else would be in the library of their own free will on a Saturday morning, then shifted her eyes onto Jake’s book. “Watcha reading?”

Anxiety shifted his stomach. He showed her the book with a cool expression.

“Rune stones?”

“Old white dudes named after rune stones,” Danny corrected snarkily, his own chemistry textbook propped up so his face was covered.

“Why?” Hermione queried, her voice kept carefully innocent.


“You don’t think you’ve kind of exhausted your resources at this point? You’re going to get caught.

She was right, technically. They had done all the classics; TP’d the draconic skeleton in her classroom, placed a photo of Nicolas Cage’s face on every cat picture in her office (seventy-three in total; the faces were provided by one Danny Fenton who, for some reason, owned a Nicolas Cage sticker book that his friends had presumably bought him for his fifteenth birthday… and that he felt he had to bring along for some reason, though Jake wasn’t complaining), had used a very thin coating of ectoplasm to cover the edges of her blackboard and made it nigh impossible for her to write on it with her wand (the students had to teach her how to use chalk, and Jake was sure he would never laugh as hard about anything again), and this weekend they were supposed to meet with the Weasley twins to organize another crime. The teachers technically had no proof they did it because they cleaned up after themselves once the deed was done, but most of the student body had figured it out. That was fine; Jake wanted some sort of credit.

Anyway, they would definitely exhaust their resources within another week if they kept this up at the rate they were going, but Jake was so far gone in his boredom at this school that he’d do literally anything for some chaos.

Jake was still trying to come up with a witty reply when Hermione suddenly spoke up, “I know you’re lying to us.”

Before Jake could defend himself, Danny dropped the book he was “reading” to stare intently at the witch. “What do you mean?”

His voice was careful, calm, but the tapping of his fingers on the table and the way the contrast between his pupils and irises seemed to sharpen showed Jake the other boy was on his guard. Him, too; his hackles rose and a small spark ignited in his chest, ready to spread throughout his body at the slightest hint of danger. Jake tried to tamp it down; Hermione was a friend, and she would never hurt them, no matter how much their trust in the school had deteriorated.

She rolled her eyes. “Come on. Every night at the library, looking through warding spells and protection potions? Don’t give me that look, Jake, I come here often and sometimes help reorder books, and you two are so unorganized your search history has become infamous among Pince, I, and a few of the other students who help. Anyway, the long studying, the shifty looks at breakfast, skipping some classes, really refusing to mingle and be democratic like you promised… I think I understand. You’ve been avoiding everyone’s questions, but I get it.”

“You do?” Jake hated how clammy his hands were. He didn’t want Danny to be right - that the
students at Hogwarts really couldn’t be trusted, that they were way in over their heads here. He wanted to believe in the good in people. It’s the one thing that managed to save Rose, and it was the one value he really wanted to keep about himself. If he lost that, then what? How could you be a hero for an entire country if you always doubted people?

Hermione gave them both a solemn nod. Danny leaned forward in his chair, anticipation taut in his body; the smell of ozone grew thicker, and Jake could have sworn he saw the light flicker for a moment in tandem to the ghost’s quick blink.

“You don’t feel safe here,” Hermione said, her voice obviously meaning to practice sympathy. “What with Umbridge, some of the students… I get it. You don’t feel like you fit in.” She placed a hand on Jake’s and gave Danny a small smile. “But you have nothing to worry about. No one can hurt you. You don’t need to know about protection spells - we have them already in place. Hogwarts is the safest place on Earth. No one dangerous gets in.”

Jake shared a quick glance with Danny - his icy blue-green eyes, pupils so dark and tiny they looked like little black holes, contrasting to Hermione’s dilated ones in the dim light. The ghost’s eyes said it all: No one dangerous gets in… no one dangerous gets out, either.

“It’s like you’re in our head,” Jake heard himself say with a laugh that didn’t quite feel like his own.

“We’ll keep you safe,” Hermione promised. “If you ever need help, just ask.”

Danny gave her a slow nod. His smile looked more forced than the civil conversations Jake would have with his cousin Greggy. Ozone.

“Oh, we are so f*cked,” Danny summed up as soon as they made their way back to their room that evening.

“Let’s not jump to conclusions,” Jake muttered, kicking off his shoes and flopping down on his bed.

“Jump t- dude, they know. She said Hogwarts has wards-”

“Yeah? Hogwarts has always had wards. It’s in its history. She didn’t mean it like that .”

Danny began to pace. “But what if-”

“Why are you always so pessimistic?” Jake exploded, sitting up in his bed. “Why can’t you just accept the fact that not everyone is out to get you?”

Danny’s eyes flashed dangerously and his nostrils flared. “I don’t know, dying kinda made me a bit of a nihilist, you know?” He stopped his pacing, put his head in his hands. Deep breath. Jake let him finish, knowing if he opened his mouth now he’d just say something he’d regret. Wow, look at you with the foresight. Maybe this castle is messing with your head.

“You don’t know what it’s like,” Danny finally said, slowly, like he was forcing the words out of his throat. “I told you about my parents. But you don’t - you don’t know. Nobody knows. ”

Jake stayed silent. His mind churned with words - they wanted to crawl out and explode, a torrent of angry rants and accusations, but clamped his mouth shut instead because he recognized someone opening up to him when it happened, and there was no way he would ruin it by saying something insensitive like he usually would.
Danny sat down on his own bed, staring blankly at the wall. “My parents - they think I’m at some NASA camp. They bought it. No questions asked. You know why?” A beat. “They think it’s more important to hunt me down and shoot the dead me than care about the living side of me.”

“Your parents don’t know Phantom is you.”

“They have to know something,” Danny insisted. Slowly, his eyes began to look more human. They swam with tears, to Jake’s surprise. “They can’t have no idea their son died. It doesn’t make any sense. They’re - they’re my mom and dad.”

Jake watched in baited silence as Danny seemed to pull himself together again, wiping at his eyes before any tears managed to escape. He felt too frozen to go over there and comfort his friend, and guilt pricked at the edges of his heart because of it.

He could say something, at least. “It sucks,” Jake tried, “it does. And you’re right, I don’t know. My parents know who I am. But, Danny, man-” he turned to him fully, and Danny’s eyes were so human it hurt, “I’ve been shot at and betrayed by people I love. I’ve been there to some level - and I know that it doesn’t always get easier, but you gotta learn to deal with it in a healthy way, and I think your way is only hurting you.” He picked at the sheets. “Hermione’s kinda right. So are you. So am I, I hope. I think we’re all right in some way. They put these stupid walls up so we can’t really trust them, but Hermione and the others have been nothing but helpful. I don’t think the students had anything to do with this and I don’t think it’s fair to assume they’re out to get us.”

“I’ll be okay,” Danny murmured.

“Nah, man, you will, but it’s something you gotta work on instead of just saying it. If there’s one thing I know about being a hero, it’s that if you never see the good in people, there doesn’t seem to be as much of a reason to save them. And that kinda ruins the whole point.”

Danny paused for a bit. Then, “Damn.” A tired laugh. “We having therapy sessions every night now, or…?”

Jake laughed; they both knew Danny was deflecting, but neither had it in themselves to care at the moment.

Danny sighed. “I think you’re right. I mean, I’m not gonna totally trust everyone, and no offense, but I think that blind trust you have is gonna get you in trouble one day-”

“I mean… point.”

“But I think maybe we could use some help, maybe. We’re not getting anywhere.” He waved his hand around. “We don’t have answers.”

“Hermione is smart,” Jake pointed out. “We could get her in on it.”

“And the others?”

“I don’t know.”

“Me neither.”

“Glad we reached that middle ground.”

Danny laughed. Black hair flopped into human blue eyes. Jake relaxed; the smell of ozone slowly slipped away.
“Here’s to nihilism,” Danny said, micking raising a glass in a toast. “May Gen Z humor never die. But may I also listen to my friends from time to time ‘cause they’re not all dumbasses, I guess.”

“Here, here,” Jake snickered.

“It’s very simple,” Fred said excitedly.

“Yet also incredibly complicated,” piped up George.

“Incredibly so.”

“Amazingly simple. Yet complicated.”

“An intricate instrument that we are both incredibly proud of, and no doubt you will be, too.”

Danny blinked down at the box, a bit put off by the twins’ freaky finishing-each-other’s-sentences spiel. “These are fireworks.”

“These are fireworks,” Jake cheered, a devious grin on his face.

“*Wizard* fireworks, my good lad,” Fred said.

“Perfect for pranking,” George added.

“We are the kings of the school when it comes to practical jokes—”

“—but if you two are willing to get into the business, we’re more than happy to help youngins such as yourselves along the way to victory.”

“You two—” Fred jabbed a finger at the flabbergasted pair before them, “need to up your game.”

“You’re weak.”

“Afraid of a challenge.”

“Afraid you’ll get caught,” George sang, “when that’s often the best part because of the *credit*.”

Jake reached over Danny’s shoulder to poke at one of the brightly-colored fireworks. “These look legit.”

Danny felt a small surge of excitement in his chest - *finally* some action. Between trying to uphold the promise of mingling with the wizards more, trying to find a solution to the ward, and finding a good time to tell Hermione what was really going on, he felt more stressed than he had in a while; which was saying something, since stress was pretty much his default at this point. He still itched to fight something, whether it be a ghost or just a particular unfortunate professor in his sights.

“How do we use them?” he asked now.

George sighed dramatically. “Alas, they’re not quite ready. We’d have to test them.”

“Which is why,” Fred said, “we’re giving you this prototype box. Use it however you wish, as long as it’s directed at Umbridge. We’re going to use the results to better our final product and go out with a bang.”

Danny wasn’t entirely sure what *going out with a bang* would entail with those two, but he
couldn’t care less at that moment. He watched Jake take the box with near giddiness, and felt a slow smile crawl across his face. Yes, the small pranks against Umbridge were fun, but they’d have nothing on what they would do with the fireworks.

“We have to plan this out carefully, bro,” Jake declared as they walked back from the hallway they had met the twins in to their room. “Meticulous. Nothing missed. We only get one shot.”

“We’re gonna get in so much trouble,” Danny cackled, holding the door open for the shorter boy as they made their way into their room.

The next few days were little more than a planning spree. They practically dropped everything to craft out the details, surviving on pop tarts and shitty coffee to get through the day as they brainstormed and goofed off.

Their temporary isolation from wizardkind (“Can’t hang out, history is in the making,” Danny told Harry) was probably the reason they didn’t hear about the latest Umbridge news until it was practically an uproar in the school. They came to the corridor leading to the Great Hall, where a wall was tacked full of announcements for the school, and were met face to face with an official-looking paper declaring Umbridge High Inquisitor, whatever that meant.

“The ministry is taking control, is what it means,” Hermione seethed during breakfast while Danny choked on a pasty he had been eating when she had sworn loudly and with feeling before launching into a tirade of anti-Umbridge rants.

Ron raised his glass. “Welcome to hell!”

Jake, however, was ecstatic.

“Incredible, showstopping, spectacular,” he hissed during one of their sit-ins at DADA (during which there were no particularly exciting disturbances, only mild amusement at the fact that the toad still had trouble writing stuff on the board through magic, since Danny hadn’t quite cleaned up all of the ectoplasm from it). “This is absolutely gold.”

Danny shot him a stare that was meant to convey the message of How the hell is government intervention in a school like this a good thing?

To which Jake stared back with, Trust me, this is gonna be off the shits. Either that or I’m gonna commit arson and there’s nothing you can do to stop me. Both were in character so Danny wasn’t quite sure which to believe.

It was during their walk to their next class that Jake finally explained. “Everyone’s gonna be paying attention to her now,” he said. “We gotta act while the news is still fresh because everyone will be watching. Everyone.”

“Sometimes I can’t stand you,” Danny laughed. “That’s so stupid. Let’s do it.”

Jake’s smirk was so smug it made Danny fall into laughter all over again.

There was chaos, absolute chaos in the school, and that was just how it should be.

More specifically, there was chaos in Umbridge’s office and the corridor outside of it who heard her shrieks. They came from the room along with various whizzes and pops, lights flashing through the tiny window in the door.
The two boys stood around the door with the rest of the student body that was there to watch. No one moved to open the door.

Danny cracked his knuckles, feeling immensely pleased with himself. “A job well done.”

Jake was hanging onto his arm, a manic grin on his face. “Holy shit, you’re amazing.”

Danny ignored the rush of warmth in his chest at the compliment. “Ghost powers—” he tapped his chest, around the area where his core would be, “-coming in handy yet again.”

The plan went like this:

Umbridge was in her office pretty much any time except class hours. Thus, she needed to be distracted to get out. Luckily, Jake was ready to be obnoxious again and managed to lure her away with a story of vomit on her desk in the classroom, then cornered her in several different spots throughout the school with his uncanny ability to take up ungodly amounts of space despite his tiny frame. He talked her ear off about the Ministry, asking questions and cutting into conversations as he pleased to ask a different one.

Meanwhile, Danny went ghost and slipped into the office (the door of which was propped open by a small book Jake had swiped from the library and placed in between the doorframe as Umbridge swept out of her office) with the fireworks. He picked out only the ones that were easiest to conceal, then stuffed them into every crevice he could find; in half-open drawers, behind cat plates, underneath her desk… everywhere.

For a dramatic flair, they had asked the Weasley twins if they couldn’t provide a remote activation for the fireworks, to which the two of them happily obliged with a timed flare. “Another prototype. I’d test it first,” George warned.

“Test runs are boring. You know what’ll happen. Where’s the fun in that?” Jake said as he took the contraption from them.

“An intellectual,” the twins chorused happily.

To tie it all together, Danny used the timed flare thing to set up the firework starters. The instrument was a small string with a nub on the end which created a spark, so several different strings allowed him to connect a few fireworks at once.

After the set up, they needed only to wait. Jake let a very steamy Umbridge back into her office, Danny came back into the visible spectrum outside and gave Jake the thumbs up - the countdown from one minute had started.

Now, the door to the office burst open and out flew about fifteen small fireworks; they spat gold and red and blue and green, in the shape of mini-lizards and fish, even one small dog. Sparks shot out of it and hit the ceiling. People screamed in delight, and the screaming quickly turned into uproarious laughter as Umbridge, in all her purple-faced, singed-hair, toad-like glory, stepped outside and pointed a finger directly at Jake and Danny (now in human form), snarling, "You."

Danny feigned innocence. “Me?”

Jake simply dissolved into a fit of laughter.

“I don’t understand what the problem is, Dolores,” Minerva asked monotonously, hands folded together as she stared at them from her desk.
Umbridge spluttered furiously; she jabbed a shaking finger at the two teenagers standing behind her, both of which were trying their hardest not to let out giggles as they stared at her singed back. “The problem - the problem, Minerva, is that these hooligans have desecrated my office, humiliated me in front of everyone-! The problem is that they should be expelled and I demand an audience with Dumbledore to do so!”

“And I’m telling you,” Minerva replied in a calm voice, “that matters concerning Mr. Long and Mr. Fenton are to be brought to me. It was a prank. We have many of those at this school.”

“It was disrespectful and treasonous.”

“Treasonous?” Minerva barked a laugh. “Dolores, I find myself in a position to tell you this myself: the students at this school are not perfect pictures of a well-behaved student body. They are teenagers who, yes, will disrespect the teachers-”

“But they are not students,” Umbridge spat. “They are here because they were invited. If they cannot behave like guests, then they should not be here.”

“I will dole out the punishment as I see fit,” Minerva drawled. She waved Umbridge away, much to the other woman’s chagrin. “Dolores, you have a class to teach. I will deal with these two. And…” she eyed the colorful sparks still settling in the woman’s awful pink coat. “Do clean up first.”

The door shut with a slam. Umbridge’s stomping could be heard for a good ten seconds as she made her way down the hall.

Minerva sighed. “If you’re going to laugh, get it out now.”

The pair lost their composure. Jake leaned his face against Danny’s shoulder, tears in his eyes, while Danny cackled like an evil mastermind. A minute later, they had finally quieted down and faced a still-cool Minerva McGonagall.

“I hope you understand that she still has a point,” the witch finally said. “It was incredibly disrespectful - you cannot go around humiliating her every day and expect no repercussions.”

“Aw, come on, Minerva,” Jake sang. “That was mad funny.”

For a moment, Danny could have sworn the professor’s mouth twitched. “I’ll ask you two to clean up her office,” she ordered. “I want everything spotless - and please, for the love of Merlin, Mr. Fenton, get rid of the ectoplasm on her blackboard. It’s only a matter of time before she realizes and it’s just getting sad at this point.”

Danny bit his tongue to keep himself from bursting out into laughter again, forcing himself to nod solemnly at the witch.

“You cannot do this again,” Minerva added, looking them both in the eye. “Understood? She’s gaining power. Any more humiliation and she might just find a way to kick you out.”

Danny kept it to himself that he honestly wouldn’t have that much of a problem with it. Instead, he shot her a thumbs up and said, holding back a snicker, “You got it. Totally understand. It wasn’t funny. Right, Jake?”

“Absolutely not. Totally irresponsible,” Jake agreed, eyes still swimming with tears. He pressed his lips together so hard they turned into a white line. He looked like he was about to explode. “Never happen again.”
Danny nodded sagely. He bit his tongue again and used the small bit of pain to stave off the attack of giggles trying to force itself out.

“Clean up her office directly after this meeting. Dismissed.” Minerva waved her hand, and the two of them walked stiffly out of her office. Once the door was closed, they shared a look and finally let the laughter loose.

Jake sat in the dark, staring at the green-bound book, night vision allowing him to see the dragon skull on the front.

One of the most memorable things Jake learned about the Huntsclan was the indoctrination. Children stolen away from their families and raised to be killers - he couldn’t imagine it. He knew how much Rose suffered, and yet - he had no idea.

“They dress the trainees in red so you can’t see the blood,” she had once told him. “The young ones are always the messiest.”

Jake let out a long breath. Why would Umbridge have this? Where did she get it from? And most importantly - why couldn’t he bring himself to destroy it?

He wanted to. God, he wanted to. Just touching it made his skin crawl all over; between those pages held the ways to kill his kind, or maybe a record of all the murders. He didn’t know why he wanted to know so bad yet at the same time feel the immense urge to incinerate the book with his fiery breath.

Another seed of doubt in Jake’s mind - which of the wizards could be trusted if they had access to this?

He was such a hypocrite; yelling at Danny for doubting everyone, then doing the same thing at the slightest chance something might be off. Maybe it was because of his initial distaste for wizards and what they stood for. Maybe it was the stress of the wards getting to him. Maybe it was the stupid book.

He was tired. He was exhausted and had no idea what he was doing. They were in over their heads, but he supposed that’s part of the thing that makes you a hero. You take risks.

If there was one thing he did know, it was that this book was bad news and Umbridge having it in her possession was a far cry from anything okay.

Jake slept fitfully that night, dreaming of dragon skulls and green weapons and clear blue eyes swimming with tears. He couldn’t tell if the eyes belonged to Rose or Danny, and wasn’t sure which he’d rather it be.

Chapter End Notes

chappies in the future will contain fewer wordcount so i can get them out quicker,, why i waited so long to decide that i have no idea

thanks again for all the comments ilysm!!!!

they..... litcherally forced me to write....... sustenance.....
ALSO!!!! im gonna change my username from everythingspiteful to something along the lines of dots, just so it fits my social media presence better since that's my go to theme on tumblr/twitter/ig etc. so if u see a different username on this or any of my other stories, it's still me!

peace out remember to hydrate!! <3
They figured they would broach the subject of the wards with Hermione that day after one of the few classes she didn’t have with Ron or Harry - Ancient Runes - maybe walk with her to her next class as they inconspicuously talked to her about it, “All subtle-like,” as Jake described it. As it was, they didn’t have to look long for the witch, running into her as they walked into the Great Hall late for breakfast. The room was already full of people, much of the food eaten, but the two boys were fast eaters, anyway.

“Woah-” Danny grabbed Jake’s arm as Hermione came running up to them, stopping the dragon from bumping into her while he seemed lost in thought. “What’s up, ‘Mione?”

“Jake, Danny,” she greeted, “thank Merlin, I was just looking for you.”

“Why, what’s happen-”

She cut Jake off by shoving a paper in his face. “I don’t have time to talk now, just make sure to meet us at this time and please, don’t tell anyone, it’s kind of a more... quiet matter.”

Jake blinked but took the paper, and the two boys barely had time to say goodbye before she was off again, throwing a “Nice to see you!” over her shoulder as she rushed out of the Great Hall.

“What was that all about?” Danny wondered aloud.

“She’s scheming, is what,” a voice said from behind them. They turned to see Ron and Harry making their way out of the cafeteria as well. Ron, who had spoken before, gave them a rare smile. “Harry doesn’t think it’s a good idea, and frankly I don’t want to involve you either, but she can be very persuasive, so.”

Jake let out a frustrated sigh. “What are you talking about?”

“Just read the paper,” Harry said tiredly and followed Ron on his way out.

The dragon looked down at the message Hermione had scrawled out, raising his brows as he read. He handed it over to Danny. “Huh.”

*Meet us by the gardens before lunch. Want to discuss learning opportunities. It’s behind Umbridge’s back so keep quiet about it. -Hermione*
Danny smiled a little. “So secretive. I wonder what it is?”

Jake yawned and turned back to the Gryffindor table they were originally heading towards. “Dunno. Don’t really care. I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.”

They piled their plates high with food, Jake seeming to find great joy in eating as many pastries as possible (“You know, I’m technically supposed to be on a diet, at least at home,” he said, “since World Dragons need to be at the top of their health. So this is, like, a really nice bit of rebellion.”). The students sitting at the table greeted them warmly and immediately joined them in a conversation about the latest potions assignments (“Snape’s out to kill me, I’m sure,” Seamus groaned).

Neville Longbottom was there as well, grinning shyly as Danny asked him how his classes were going. “I’m doing better than I expected, and Herbology is surely going to get me a good score on the OWLs. Though I do wish they’d let up on the homework.”

“God, same,” Danny groaned, thinking back to the unfinished chemistry homework he had sitting on his bed. Trying to homeschool himself was a hundred times worse than sitting in a stuffy classroom, what with his focusing issues, and there were plenty of distractions at Hogwarts, that was for sure.

“Are you two planning on doing more in the classes?” A seventh year asked them.

“Wha’y mean?,” Jake asked around a mouthful of pastry. He was eating like he had just spent two weeks without food in the desert and had just rejoined civilization. Danny snorted and pushed a napkin in his direction. He swallowed and asked again: “What do you mean?”

“It’s just,” she said, “I overheard McGonagall talking to one of the professors about you two telling us about your worlds and culture. Dragons and the like, as well of course. It’s all very interesting—”

“Aw, c’mon, I’m sure they have their own work to worry about,” a student sitting next to her cut in.

Danny waved him off. “It’s fine, we’re technically supposed to do that anyway. Yeah, we kinda slacked off on it, huh?” He rubbed his neck subconsciously. “The truth is, we don’t really have any set instructions on what to do here.”

“More like, make friends and don’t burn down the school,” Jake piped up.

“You’ve been struggling on that front, huh? Mister “Watch How Far I Can Toss A Fireball?” Danny grinned under Jake’s glower.

“Oh, shut up, Casper.”

“Look,” Danny said to the students, “we’re an open book.” Ha. “If you have any questions, feel free to ask. And if we see an opening in the classes, then absolutely we can tell you some stuff.”

“Is it true the Dracos live on a hidden island?” A small kid piped up, looking at Jake in awe.

The fourteen-year-old put down the cup of juice he had been inhaling. “Yeah, sorta. It’s hidden, like only dragons - uh, Dracos - and some other special peeps appointed by the council can get to it, but we don’t all live there. I was raised in New York.”

“So there are communities for Dracos in the human world?”
“Uh.” Jake glanced sideways at Danny, who shrugged. It was up to him how much he wanted to say, how much he wanted to trust them. “Not really? Not like in here. We live around nonmagicals. Uh, muggles. We have a human form, so it’s super easy to blend in. Wow, y’all really don’t know a lot about us, huh?”

Danny supposed he was a little surprised at the fact that there was so little known about Jake’s species; then again, the wizards were Independent, so that the Dragon Council would never feel obligated to check up on them and otherwise act as a sort of protector like with other magical creatures. But from what he’d gathered staying in Hogwarts, they seemed cut off from pretty much anyone that wasn’t their own, muggles included. They had a whole class for muggle studies, for Ancient’s sake. He was a little disconcerted that they would spend so much time learning about the functions of an iron, but at the same time, he had to concede it was at least a little bit funny.

“I think that’s why they’re asking you to teach us,” the seventh year who had originally brought up the question pointed out.

“...Right,” Jake was saying as the bell began to ring; all around them, the students stood up from their desks to get to their first period class, some waving goodbye to the halfa and dragon quickly shoving the remainder of their food in their mouths before it magically disappeared.

As they made their way out of the Great Hall, Danny turned to Jake and asked, “So what was it that you were thinking before we got here?”

“Huh?”

“Dude, I had to basically stop you from running into Hermione, you were so zoned out.”

“Oh.” Jake ran his fingers through his spiked hair, something Danny was recognizing to be a nervous habit of his. “I was just... thinking.”

“No shit? Really?”

A slight smile graced Jake’s lips and he bumped his shoulders against Danny. “It’s about the book Hermione was looking at,” he confessed. “The one about the - the Huntsclan.”

“Ah.”

“Dark shit to be thinking about at eight in the morning, huh?”

Danny recognized the tone under his attempted humor. “You don’t have to read it.”

“Yeah, I know, everyone always tells me to distance myself from Huntsclan stuff. Apparently I experienced a ‘traumatic event’ and need to ‘let myself process my emotions and heal,’” Jake said, using air quotes. “But like, I’m really curious? Like, so curious. And I really wanna know what the hell Umbridge was doin’ with that book, y’know?”

Danny sighed, looking up at the ceiling of the hallway they walked aimlessly down. “Same, I guess.”

The school was so big - the amount of rooms and hallways and high ceilings was staggering, and it was a wonder they managed to familiarize themselves with most of it. Sometimes Danny thought he’d get lost in the castle and never find a way out. Never find a way home.

Jake’s scales really did work like armor; they were nearly impossible to penetrate and any time
Danny tried to punch it, the shock just traveled uncomfortably back into his own arm. Ideally, he would have used the dragon’s larger body to his advantage since it was a bigger target, if Jake didn’t have the incredibly annoying ability to shapeshift quickly into his smaller, human form every time he tried to land a hit.

Danny soared as high as he could with the sparring room’s ceilings and fired a few shards of ghostly ice at the dragon below him, taking care not to use too much ectoplasm after the last incident - they still didn’t know the full effects of ecto on magical armor - then braced himself as Jake suddenly launched himself up, fire in his eyes. Danny ducked at the last second, using a little intangibility just in case, and dove back to the ground. He used the second of being in Jake’s blind spot to grab his tail and leg and touch it to the ground, where he then encased it in a block of ice.

Before Danny could pin him completely, however, Jake erupted into flames and switched back to human form and yanked his much smaller foot out of the ice with ease.

Danny groaned. “Stop doing that!”

“Most useful trick I’ve learned,” Jake laughed. “It’s hard to pin me down.”

“Oh yeah? So am I,” Danny retorted when Jake rushed at him and he turned intangible at the last moment, leaving the boy to stumble a little as he fell through his opponent. Before Danny could move, however, he felt something snake around his feet and yank, sending him sprawling to the floor. Jake was on him in a moment, pinning his body to the ground as he pressed on his shoulder.

Danny’s mind went blank as Jake grinned at him, their faces only inches apart - for some reason, he didn’t think to just go intangible, and the match was over as Jake touched a claw to his throat and said, “Dead, twice-over. I win.”

Danny let out a breath, his head falling back to the floor of the sparring room while Jake stood up. He accepted the boy’s hand, still transformed into one with claws and scales, allowing himself to be pulled up.

“Almost had me there, though,” Jake remarked cheerfully, bouncing on the balls of his feet. He transformed his hand back to normal and used it to run a hand through his hair, pushing it out of his eyes. Confusion flickered in his eyes as he looked at Danny. “You alright there, pal?”

Danny blinked. “Uh, yeah.” He rubbed his eyes. “Just tired, I think. Good job, I’ll, uh. Get changed. Then we can go meet up with the others. It’s almost that time anyway.”

“Kay…” Danny heard Jake trail off behind him as he made his way to the main room for fresh clothing, transforming back into Fenton as he went along. As he picked out a soft shirt and pants to put on, he tried not to think about the way Jake kept having him freeze up anytime he got too close. The friendly touches on his shoulders, hands, and back were becoming more frequent as their bond strengthened and Danny wasn’t sure why it made him both giddy and nervous at the same time. Not to mention it made sparring all that much harder, unable to really concentrate as hard on blocking the other boy’s attacks when he was too distracted by the way his arms moved.

Jake snorted, bringing Danny out of his pondering. “How many NASA shirts do you have?”

Danny glanced down at the NASA-print shirt he held in his arms, then back at his friend, who wore an infuriating smirk as he picked out his own fresh set of clothes. “I’m sorry,” Danny snarked, “who’s the one who unironically says shit like ‘I’m a skater boy?’”

“Those are not the same thing, and it’s totally ironic.”
“Uh huh.” Danny pushed past him to the bathrooms. “Let’s just get ready to go, Dragon Boy.”

“Dragon Boy, huh?” Jake mused, a bit of amusement in his voice. “Haven’t heard that one in a bit.”

Danny would have asked what he meant, but there were places they had to be, so he opted to just get changed as soon as possible before they were late.

Not that Hermione had actually given them an exact time, just “before lunch.” They decided to get to the gardens just after classes ended, since there was about a five-minute window in between that period and when lunchtime officially started, though students didn’t typically get to the Great Hall till later.

The Hogwarts gardens connected to the greenhouse, where Herbology lessons were held. Danny wasn’t quite sure who took care of the flora, exactly, but students always took great care walking around that area so as not to disturb any particularly dangerous plants. Because they couldn’t have a separate, locked area for growing the poisonous flowers, apparently.

Hermione was already there when they arrived, standing a bit impatiently by one of the giant pumpkins. She visibly relaxed as she caught sight of the two boys. Jake waved at her, a grin on his face.

“Hey,” Danny greeted, “what’s up?”

Hermione bit her lip, looked around as if to see if anyone was watching - and someone very well could be, what with how uptight Umbridge had been recently. “I had an idea,” she began, beginning to walk down the path of the garden, back where they had come from. As Danny and Jake followed, she continued, “it’s got to do with Umbridge.”

“Well, spit it out,” Jake egged her on, eyes sparking mischievously at the High Inquisitor’s name.

“We - well, mostly me, Ron’s on board but Harry’s a little skeptical - want to start a club,” she said, excitement tinting her voice. “Since, well, DADA is loads of rubbish, right? Umbridge hasn’t been teaching us anything, and she’s absolutely awful to the students.”

“Don’t we know it,” Danny groaned. “I really thought a class about defending against the dark arts would be more than just taking notes.”

“It should be!” Hermoine whirled around and stopped them in their tracks. They stood just outside a door into the school. “That’s what it used to be like. We’d practice spells, they’d teach us useful stuff, but now the Ministry isn’t taking any threats seriously and sent that… that toad-” She stopped herself with a huff. “Anyway, we were thinking of starting a club for actual defense. It’ll have to be secret, of course, there’s no way Umbridge would allow it. And Harry would be the teacher.”

They didn’t really see Harry in action much, Danny supposed, but he still gave off an air of scruffy, angry fifteen-year-old who wants to dismantle the government more than a teacher for a club on self defense. But, hey, maybe he was basing the kid too much off of him or Jake. The two of them certainly weren’t teachers by any means, but they definitely knew how to throw a punch.

“He’s been through more than many students here, and is brilliant at self defense,” Hermione defended. “He’s too modest about it, but I think he could do it.”
“So where do we come in?” Danny found himself asking.

Hermione shot him a grin full of uncharacteristic mischief. “We were thinking you two could help out. I know you two can fight, and you’re technically here on a mission to spread your gifts, right? Having a half-ghost and a dragon on our side wouldn’t hurt, plus it would get you more popularity among the students, at least those not on Umbridge’s side.”

“We’re on missions to spread our gifts or whatever, yeah,” Jake interjected. “But we aren’t supposed to go behind any backs to do it.”

Danny stared at him. “Seriously? You’re taking Umbridge’s side?”

Jake snorted. “Nah. I’m messin’ with ya. Sounds fun, I’m in.”

Hermione blinked in surprise. “Really? I mean, I’m glad, but I wouldn’t want you in any trouble-”

“We’ll do it,” Danny promised. “Let us know when and where to meet up, we’ll be there.”

“I’ll let you know when the first meeting is!” Hermione smiled brightly at them. “Thank you so much. Listen, I’ve gotta go, Harry and Ron are waiting for me at lunch - unless you’re joining us?”

“Actually,” Jake said suddenly, poking Danny’s arm, “we were thinking of talking to you about something.”

“Hm? Oh. ” Danny nearly facepalmed. That was the whole point of them trying to get in touch with her since this morning, wasn’t it? They needed to talk to her about the wards.

In truth, he was still nervous about asking for help. Hell, he was nervous about going with Hermione’s plan with the club - the little anxious voice inside him was telling him to fly away from everyone, don’t get too close. *Ghosts don’t need friends.*

But he did - he really did, and ignoring his problems weren’t going to make them go away. It was time to take Jake’s route for once, and actually *do something* about the friends they had made here. Besides, Hermione was smart as hell, and he had no doubt she’d be able to help them out if she really wanted to.

*Her intelligence makes it easy to double cross you as well,* a voice whispered in Danny’s mind, and he pushed away in favor of saying, “meet us by the Room of Requirement - seventh floor, by an ugly tapestry of this guy-”

"Barnabus the Barmy," Jake said.

"-once you’ve finished eating?” Danny finished, wondering how the hell Jake had remembered the name of the tapestry (and who had even told him in the first place).

“We’ve got pop tarts, don’t worry about us skipping,” Jake chimed in as she opened her mouth again, presumably to invite them to sit with the rest of the wizards.

Hermione looked at them both, curiosity sparking in her brown eyes, then nodded. “Sure. I’m assuming you don’t want me to let anyone else know?”

“Yeah,” Danny confessed sheepishly.

“I’ll meet you there, then.” With a wave, she was off.

Jake rapped his knuckles against Danny’s head. “See? Wasn’t so bad.”
But Danny had a bad feeling. Maybe it was his anxiety talking - maybe he could stand to be cautious for just a little longer.

Hermione was acting… shifty, to say the least, all throughout lunch. She didn’t meet Harry or Ron’s eyes, didn’t talk as much about the new schoolwork as they’d expected, and seemed distracted to the point where she almost used her cup of pumpkin juice as gravy over the meat.

It wasn’t necessarily frustrating since Harry had Ron to talk to as well. Odd and concerning? Yeah, a little.

“Alright, spill,” Harry finally burst when Hermione only replied to their questions on the latest essay with an mhmm or no, totally. “What happened with Danny and Jake?”

“Nothing,” Hermione said quickly, “I mean, I told them about the meeting times, and then we were on our way.” A bit of guilt flashed in her eyes.

Ron had caught it too. “Mm? Sure,” he said with his mouth full. Crumbs lined his lips. Hermione rolled her eyes and pressed a napkin against his mouth, forcefully wiping it clean. “Oi!”

“You’re impossible,” she complained.

“And you’re hiding something,” Harry cut in, not in the mood to let them bicker. “Come on, what did they say?”

Hermione stared at him. “Nothing happened, Harry, so you can stop acting all concerned. Honestly, it’s like the moment you turn your backs to the two you immediately assume they’re going to jump you.”

Harry threw his hands up. “I do not!”

Hermione gave him a look, and Ron, the traitor, followed suit.

Harry sighed. “Alright, maybe Danny’s a little quiet and suspicious, but that’s it. I don’t hate them, they’re nice enough.”

“That’s not what you said last night,” Ron piped up, the traitor, and Hermione whirled around to look at him.

“What did he say?” she demanded.

Ron gave Harry a pointed look, who groaned dramatically, tossing his fork on the plate. “Nothing. It’s just, it’s a little odd how they haven’t really told us much about their lives, isn’t it?”

“They’ve told us plenty, what do you mean?” Hermione argued.

“We don’t know where the Isle of Draco is.”

“Neither does Jake. It’s hidden.”

“So? That’s not suspicious? And look at Danny - I mean, he’s right dead, sure, but he can blend in so well - they both can. It’s not odd to you how we didn’t know much about them at all?” Harry let out a breath. “Besides, I feel like they’re watching me.”

“Why would they do that?” Ron asked.
“Well, lately it’s let up, but Danny, I swear, he’s just. Always lurking, I feel. I don’t know. He makes my skin crawl just a bit.” Harry sighed again. “I feel bad saying it because they are nice, and I consider them my friends, but it’s just weird. They’re kinda… preoccupied.”

Hermione looked a little guilty again.

“‘Mione,” Ron said.

She looked back at her food. “Hopefully nothing after today,” she muttered, then stood up abruptly. “I’ve gotta go.”

“Where?” Ron began to stand up as well. “We’ll go with-”

“No!” Hermione yelped, then clamped her mouth shut. “No, it’s just some studying I forgot to do, you two finish your meals. Lunch is almost over, I’ll see you next period.” Before they could say anything, she was gone.

Ron rolled his eyes at Harry. “She’s nuts.”

Harry just grunted, then stuck another piece of meat in his mouth. Whatever the witch was doing, they could question her about it later.

“Oh, Merlin’s Beard,” Hermione moaned, leaning her head in her hands.

“Yeah,” Jake said.

“And I’m the first one you’ve told?”

“Pretty much,” Danny answered, rubbing the back of his neck.

Hermione bit her lip in concentration, looking at the two boys in front of her. They sat on the bed made for Jake, side by side, while she sat on Danny’s. The dorm room they had been given was bigger than she had expected, complete with a small kitchen - or rather, cupboards full of what she guessed was food - as well as a minifridge.

It took them a while to settle down and actually talk about the issue at hand. Jake was more fidgety than normal and Danny just looked uncomfortable, but he always sort of did, so that wasn’t really a surprise, especially since they let her into the actual room they were staying in and didn’t just meet up somewhere else. The two had been more elusive the past few weeks and Hermione was beginning to worry it was because of something she or the others had done, but now that the full story was laid out - well, she supposed it wasn’t the full story, they didn’t seem the type to be so open - she could see why they had been more distant lately.

“So to reiterate,” Hermione said, “Jake, you can’t get through, but Danny, you can.”

“We think I might be able to with practice,” Jake corrected. “But we don’t know how much we wanna try it and it does mess with my chi a bit, which isn’t exactly healthy.”

“And it’s got an effect on me, too, but yeah, I can push through,” Danny said.

Hermione blew a strand of hair out of her face. “This is… this is big.”

“Yeah, that’s why we’ve been researching-”

“No, you don’t understand,” she cut Jake off. “For a protection spell of that sort, you’d need a lot
of power. It doesn’t look like whoever made it had enough to make it fully functional, but it’s still a lot. They knew what they were doing, which means they’ve been watching you, getting information on you before you got here, and they could still be doing so.”

The two boys looked alarmed, like they hadn’t really thought about being watched outside of Hogwarts. “We figured whoever set them up could be in the castle, which was why we didn’t talk about this till now,” Danny confessed. "To be honest, we have no idea who we can trust.”

“You can trust me,” Hermione said firmly. She was enormously glad they had come to her for help instead of the professors - now that Umbridge was High Inquisitor, she had no idea what the professors were supposed to report due to the Ministry interfering. They were in unknown waters. “Although I will say your usual routine of researching in the library won’t work. You’re way too obvious. I figured something was up because of all the books you were leaving around.”

“But you were only half right,” Jake said with a self-satisfied grin.

Hermione snorted. “Yes, but you’re still idiots for doing all of that so in the open.” If she was being honest with herself, she was a little disgruntled at being wrong, no matter how much so. They were being ridiculously careless, especially if their captor was in the school with them, but them still getting away with it when usually she prided herself on being able to figure out people’s secrets showed that their impulsiveness was paired with insane amounts of luck.

“First off,” she told them now, “You’ll need a circle of people you can trust. The club we’re putting together will give you that - we’re all sort of spitting in the face of authority with it, aren’t we? Second-” an excited grin found itself on her face, “If you’re going to keep on researching, let me help. I know a lot about protection wards, and I’m friends with Harry, who’s brilliant with defense. We’re the best you’re going to get in the help department. Third,” she said loudly as Danny’s mouth opened to cut her off, “did you two check to see if the wards spanned the whole school? Or just that one area?”

“It goes along the cliffs close to the village,” Jake answered. “I don’t know about the whole school. But we can enter the forest just fine.”

Hermione nodded. “Too many wards would draw attention to the Headmaster, so I doubt it spans the whole way, or if it does, it’s very loosely applied.”

“You don’t think Albus knows?” Danny asked, skeptical.

Hermione thought for a moment. “I think he’s a good person,” she said carefully. “I don’t think he’d keep you here against your will, but I can’t say for sure he doesn’t have a hidden agenda. I can say, though, that whatever he’s planning isn’t evil. You can trust him.”

Jake snorted at that, for reasons Hermione wasn’t really sure. “You guys love your secrecy so much,” he said, a surprising amount of venom in his voice. “Y’all with your Order and magic and wards and hidden agendas. You can’t tell us to trust someone you yourself just said could have ulterior motives, yo.”

Hermione was about to defend the headmaster - she knew the two boys had been allowed to sit in on Order meetings, had heard some of their plans, so they didn’t really have a right to talk about withholding information. Especially with Harry’s concerns, she thought suddenly, though a thread of guilt wormed its way into her chest at the negative feelings towards her friends.

“Just…” Danny rubbed his neck again. “Don’t go telling people about this.”
Hermione narrowed her eyes, catching the hidden meaning. “Danny, Ron and Harry are my friends and I’m not about to keep secrets from them. You trust me, you trust them as well.”

To her surprise, it was Jake that spoke before Danny could retort. “Yeah, whatever. We’ll be around them a bunch for the defense club. Don’t tell the teachers, we mean.”

“Sure,” Danny muttered.

There was a darkness in those boys, Hermione realized, that they carried in their hearts. What it was from their pasts that made it so hard to trust people she didn’t know, and to say she wasn’t curious was lying to herself. But she wanted to help mend that bridge between them, between their worlds, and if it was one more thing on her plate on top of Harry’s scar hurting and the Order, then so be it.

After all, she liked a challenge.

Chapter End Notes

ch11 will be up REALLY quick, i have it written i just gotta edit lol. also holy fuck i’m so excited, the plot’s gonna get super dummy thicc and we’re only a couple months into the school year ☝️ i got my outline Ready 2 Go Babey!!!!

(oh my god, i started this fic in 2018, that's a whole two years ago, it's 2020, what the fuck, i only have 10 chapters done, oh my god, 20 fucking 18)

follow me on tumblr/twitter :o)
diana's hunt

Chapter Summary

jake and danny get a lead on the wards, also did you know i'm not straight

Chapter Notes

ok lol idk how i feel about this one but if i stare at it any longer i'm gonna lose my fucking mind so. hi

also if you look at the relationships tag i updated it to jake/danny because i realized that my "they're just friends they're super close tho :)’’ was a coward's move so uhm slow burn babey!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a few days after the initial meeting with Hermione that the two inhabitants in the Room of Requirement lay in a bout of unrest, unsurprisingly so with the mysteries surrounding Hogwarts growing ever thicker. Umbridge was unyielding in her position as the crabbiest High Inquisitor ever, though admittedly Jake had no other Inquisitor to compare her to and it was possible that all of them were equally annoying.

Rumors circulated the school about her position amongst the teachers and their careers, some students worrying she would start 
sacking people. (Because they were all British and Jake genuinely didn't realize that meant firing. In fact, he had to endure Danny's teasing when wondering out loud if it meant Umbridge was actually putting people in sacks; which, to be honest, he wouldn't put past her.)

As it was, Danny had just gotten off a phone call with his sister (who really was just an older version of Haley - it was incredible how similar his and Jake's lives were, when you got down to it) while Jake had munched on some poptarts due to skipping breakfast in favor of lying in bed and staring at the ceiling angrily for an hour or so, courtesy of the cursed (figuratively, of course) object that had been lying under his bed for the past week and a half.

The poptarts were stale as always, and the orange juice they had swiped from the kitchens tasted a bit like dust and plastic after sitting on the counter for God knows how long. The luggages the two boys had brought with them were still rather full of clothes, since they had somehow never gotten around to moving them all into the closets provided for them. Jake's curtain had a small hole in it from when he had accidentally ripped it with his claws, and the mini fridge was almost depleted of sodas.

Home sweet home, right?

Jake paced around the room, using his tongue to try and dislodge a piece of poptart stuck in his teeth. Danny was waiting for him on his bed, a concerned look in his eye and a certain book in his hands.
“Seriously, Jake,” Danny said for the millionth time that day, “we can just burn it.”

“I fucking know,” Jake ground out, “but we need to know why Umbridge had it with her. And what’s inside it.”

“What’s inside it is Huntsclan junk.” Danny narrowed his eyes. “Which you clearly don’t want to look at.”

Jake side-eyed the book in Danny’s hands, glanced up to meet the halfa’s eyes once, then dove.

Danny yelped and tried to jump away, but Jake managed to snatch the book up and flop onto his bed. “Jake,” Danny said in a warning tone.

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Jake muttered, hesitating only a moment before opening the tome up. The Huntsclan’s logo on the inside sent a shiver down his spine, exaggerated as Danny sat down next to him with his much cooler body temperature.

“Let me at least read with you,” the ghost suggested.

Jake’s lips twisted into a warm smile. “‘Aight.”

The book started off with a table of contents, sorted into different sections for what looked, surprisingly, like history lessons. Jake expected it to be more along the lines of a training manual for new recruits (recruits as a term used loosely, considering most members were stolen at birth and raised to be killers), but seeing the dates and titles marking the different chapters, it looked more like a collection of different Huntsclan tales throughout the centuries.

The Pixie Mania, 1643
Salem Massacre, 1693
Goblins Take Hostages, 1702
The Changeling Myth, 1766
The Heroics of Edward the Explosive, 1832
The Huntsclan Mark Purge, 1899

The dates went all the way up to the 1980’s, the titles of which all had to do with villainizing the magicals the Huntsclan were slaughtering, or “fighting against for freedom and purity.” A quick peek into a random page detailed the gruesome murder of a rock giant which had been “terrorizing the villages,” despite rock giants being famously gentle and shy.

“We captured the great beast with a weighted iron-and-sphynx net,” the passage read. “We had the trainees begin the cleansing process; burning its feet, its eyes, and scratching at its weaker rock links with an iron knife. We then had the more seasoned members come up to the creature and tear off its rocks making up its body one by one, stopping its unearthly screeching by taking off its mouth first, until there was nothing-”

Danny slammed the book shut. “Jake.”

He felt sick, and his hands shook. What felt like a rock (fuck) was lodged in his throat, and the edges of his vision were blurring. The taste of ash lay on his tongue. Danny, though sitting right near him, looked like he was many feet away.

“Bad idea,” Jake managed to choke out.

“Yeah.”
“I need to keep reading.”

“Are you shitting me?”

“I’m fine.” Deep breaths. In and out. Just like Sun taught him. In and out. In and out. In and-

“Jesus, dude, you turned totally white,” Danny said. “I can’t let you keep looking at this.”

“The Salem Witch Trials,” Jake insisted. “There was something about Salem.”

“And?”

“It’s a bit of a gap in our history,” he said, rubbing the bridge of his nose. His stomach slowly stopped churning. “Like, we know what happened, sort of - humans caught some witches practicing magic in broad daylight, and it lead to them killing a bunch of nonmagicals out of fear. But we know the Huntsclan was there, though we don’t know why. It’s missing from our files, there’s like this huge conspiracy-”

“We came here to find out why Umbridge had the book, not for you to get another panic attack trying to read it,” Danny said firmly. “Or… or like, I don’t know, a flashback, I don’t know, Jake. You said you dealt with the Huntsclan a lot, and you wanting to look at this stuff with no regard for your own health isn’t good. Trust me.”

Jake let out a breath and lay down on his back, staring up at the ceiling of his room. He remembered waking up the day after the incident in Hong Kong with the taste of blood in his mouth and the ashy scent of the Dark Dragon all around him. And seeing Rose… seeing Rose was nice, getting to talk to her again made him happy, especially now that she had her family, but the uniform she wore to the fight and the way she fought twisted his stomach and reminded him too much of the nights he’d be hiding a family of faeries from the Huntsclan’s murderous hands.

He looked back at the book. *They pulled the rocks from its body one by one.*

Umbridge having the book was what worried him the most. The Huntsclan had been gone for about a year now, destroyed to the point where the only legacy they had left were their old bases and a few of their files the Council had burned to ashes. It was policy not to leave anything they had behind, to get rid of any trace of their existence, something that a few groups had argued against. After all, having that information would make it easier to prevent something like this from ever happening again. Jake was just glad he never had to see those dragonskin cloaks again.

But if their history was supposed to be burned, and the wizards hadn’t even been a part of the magical empire as Jake knew it for so long, how the hell did Umbridge get her hands on their stuff? And how much of it? His stomach dropped when he thought about the toad owning any of their weapons or tech.

Danny was holding his hand, Jake realized belatedly. The ghost had set the book on the nightstand in favor of rubbing soothing circles into the back of his hand, icy eyes seemingly staring into space. Jake let himself relax just a little, his eyes shifting back to the book-

“Hey, Casper,” he said sharply, “what’s that piece of paper sticking out of it?”

Danny started, tightening his grip a bit on Jake’s hand before looking at the book; sure enough, a small piece of parchment stuck out from between the pages, presumably moved while they had been looking through it. After a quick moment’s hesitation, Danny pulled the book towards him with his free hand and opened it to the page the paper was stuck between. Keeping his arm leaning on the page so that Jake couldn’t read the words, he unfolded the piece of paper and skimmed
through it, confusion furrowing his eyebrows. “Think you can make any sense of this?” he asked, handing it over to Jake.

Jake sat up and accepted the paper. The handwriting was slightly familiar, though he couldn’t quite put his finger on who it was exactly. On it was just a few lines of words:

_Soulflesh and moldavite (XX) gem- sphynx?
Aiydah - the ancients, Diana’s Hunt (see Drakaina?)
Wizards (vs. Sorcerers) & Draconic history (Res. Gerwidge)

“Okay, cool cool cool cool cool,” Jake gritted out.

“What does it mean?”

Jake pointed at the last two lines. “That’s about dragons. And. The Huntsclan.”

“Diana’s Hunt?”

“It’s a code term they used to refer to themselves a while back. I’m sure they used it in this book.”

Danny frowned. “Diana was Roman the goddess of the hunt, but the way they’re using her name isn’t at all what she stood for.”

Of course the nerd would be into fucking mythology as well. Jake snorted. “It’s the Huntsclan. They never do anything accurately.”

“Drakaina is Greek,” Danny pointed out, yet again cementing the fact he had probably read _Percy Jackson_ in middle school. “A female dragon or something, right?”

Jake shrugged. “Something like that. It sounds a lot like…” he trailed off.

Danny squeezed his hand. “Like what?”

Jake pointed at the word Aiydah. “This looks like a word in Draconic. The old language, like when the Ancients were still around - Gramps made me study some of it as part of our history course. Aiydah sounds like the name of the first shapeshifting dragon, but it’s spelled phonetically. It’s not the right alphabet and definitely not the right spelling but I don’t know what else it could be, especially paired with the word Drakaina, which is what some dragons think could be a link to that first documentation of a dragon who can shapeshift. A lot of our history is linked with the Greeks, but I’m pretty sure we came somewhere from Asia originally.”

“Back up,” Danny spluttered. “Ancients?”

“The Ancients,” Jake began, struggling to remember the history lessons, “were the original dragons. Huge, like way bigger than us, and only had a dragon form. They went extinct centuries ago. The last of them gave the first chi, or powers, to, uh, Aiydah” - the name didn’t quite fit right, but he couldn’t quite remember the exact way to pronounce it and it was tricky to do so with a human tongue - “who used her powers to keep the Draconic lineage going. That’s why we have human forms, to blend in.” Jake tapped the words _Diana’s Hunt_. “There’s, like, a whole thing that the Huntsclan was the one to wipe out the Ancients, but the story varies from culture to culture. It’s kinda our origin story but also something you’d tell your kids before bed. I don’t know which parts are actually true and which are fairy tales because there are so many different interpretations and a lot of it’s been lost to time.”
Danny was silent for a moment. “You think Umbridge was researching what - how dragons who can shapeshift came to be? And that the Huntsclan had something to do with it?”

“That or whoever wrote this note,” Jake amended. “Plus, it’s not that far a fetch she’d want to learn about the power we have. Our chi hold a lot of it, it’s why the Council is still ruling after so many years without a lot of pushback.”

“And soulflesh?” Danny asked.

“No idea.”

Danny peered down at the words again. “Moldavite - that’s the gemstone Fu Dog asked you to look at, right? And sphynx hair can slow chi energy?”

“Yeah, these are definitely for the wards.” Jake rubbed his eyes. “Umbridge is digging into shit she’d be better off without.”

Danny took the paper and slipped it back between the pages he had taken it out of. “We have a lead, at least.” He tapped the book. “What are we doing about this?”

Jake wanted to burn it. He wanted nothing more than to make it a pile of ash on the floor, to forget it ever existed, to never see that logo again. His mouth betrayed him: “Let’s keep it for a little while, hide it somewhere. I still wanna find out just how much info Umbridge has been getting her hands on.”

Herbology wasn’t something Jake or Danny were particularly interested in, but the teacher, Pomona Sprout, had at least acted decently enough towards them that the boys enjoyed sitting in her class.

They sat by two chairs in the back amongst the nicer smelling flora, though judging by Jake’s facial expressions, his sensitive nose picked up on the scents a little too much despite the pleasant aromas. Danny himself never really cared for floral scents; it tickled his nose too much, and Jazz dragging them into every Bath and Body Works they had at the Amity Park mall had ruined the chance of him ever enjoying anything strongly scented. As it was, the colors and bustle around him from the plants and students distracted him enough to make the experience bearable.

“Many plants have medical properties, and their uses have spanned many centuries, considered to be one of the oldest forms of medication,” Sprout was saying as she held up a particularly vividly colored flower. “It can help cure many ailments, from small aches and pains to full-blown illnesses such as dragon pox.”

Whatever the fuck that is, Danny thought, raking his brain for anything Jake might have mentioned on dragon pox and if it could affect him, since he was, well. A dragon. The only thing he could think of was dragon flu, which was, according to Jake, practically just a nastier version of the normal flu and involved lots of singed clothing. (Yeah, nights at Hogwarts sometimes got boring enough that they decided to describe their worst cases of sickness, of all things.)

Either way, evidently it struck a chord within the second year students, if the sudden surprised muttering by a small group of Ravenclaws was anything to go by.

“Mixing magic and flora is a highly effective method to combat various wounds and illnesses as well,” Sprout continued. “Putting them in potions can further enhance the effects. Muggles themselves use plants to treat each other. It’s in every culture.”
Danny had to hold in a snort at that. The wizards really thought themselves so far removed from those without magic, it was almost funny. They were both human, and Jake had shown him that it was entirely possible to live a normal life among “muggles” instead of hiding away and acting like it was the Middle Ages with their If You Even Think About Using Electronics In Here You’ll Literally Die, Seriously Dude Trust Me mentality.

The kids were set on grinding up the petals of some flower for its oils (that didn’t sound right to Danny, but he didn’t know enough about plant oil to dispute it) and Sprout took the time to write the homework on the board; overall it didn’t look like anything particularly interesting was going to happen, so Danny turned to Jake for conversation. “Recognize anything?”

“Nah,” Jake said with the expression of someone who had just been forced to swallow a lemon whole, “but I don’t really pay any attention to Gee’s rambling about plants. Maybe you can make tea out of some of this but the smell is so strong I can’t fuckin’ tell any of it apart.”

“You look like you’re in pain,” Danny pointed out.

“Thank—” Jake suddenly scrunched up his nose and turned his head into his arm to sneeze.

“Bless you,” Danny snickered, the dragon glaring daggers at the kids who had whipped their heads around to stare.

“What, ain’t y’all ever seen someone with allergies?” Jake snapped at them, and when they turned back around, he said to Danny, “I swear it wasn’t this bad last time we sat here.”

“It’s about to get worse,” Danny said, watching Sprout, who was making her way over to the two of them. Jake followed his gaze and groaned.

“Everything all right, Mr. Long?” Sprout asked pleasantly, her outfit and wispy grey hair screaming kind grandma but her firm voice making Danny glad he never had to worry about getting graded by her.

“Peachy,” Jake said, trying to grin and failing miserably as it looked more like he was just baring his teeth at her. His eyes were slightly red and teary eyed.

“We had a few new flora shipped in today, I wouldn’t be surprised if it produced some mild allergic reactions,” the professor said, having the decency to look apologetic. “Do you want to step out?”

“M’fine,” Jake waved her off. “Swear.”

Sprout nodded but made no move to leave. Danny involuntarily started to bounce his leg up and down as she stared at Jake expectantly.

“Is something wrong?” Jake asked stiffly.

She unfroze. “Actually,” Sprout said with an undertone of excitement, “I was wondering if either of you wanted to do a small demonstration to the class. Since you’re here. We’ll be delving into several different recipes for plant treatments over the week and no doubt the students will appreciate a lesson in Draconic culture. Or, ah, ghosts as well,” she added as an afterthought. “Though I’ll admit I don’t know what cures people such as yourself would have,” she admitted to Danny.

Because they were dead, right. Why have cures for illnesses if you were already dead? “I don’t know a whole lot about it, anyway,” Danny said, “but Jake would be happy to help.”
“I’d be happy to *what*?” Jake’s facial expression went through the five stages of grief in just a few moments. “No, I mean - I’m not that well versed in it, I don’t know a whole lot, I’m sure Danny would understand more since he’s older and all.”

“Nah, I’m kinda dumb,” Danny cut in cheerfully. “Besides, you were just telling me the other day about the stuff you use to help speed up your healing, what you put in tea-”

Jake stared at him and Danny stared right back, leaving the two in a staring contest where the dragon tried to communicate something with his eyes along the lines of *I’m not fucking getting up and sneezing all over the class, asshole*, and Danny countered with *You’re getting up there to do your job or so help me Ancients.*

Finally, Jake looked to the sky for a moment as if praying for peace. “Fine, yeah, okay, I’d be happy to say some stuff,” he said, not sounding happy at all, and lifted himself off the chair as slowly as possible, then spent fifteen or so seconds dramatically cracking his back.

Sprout led him to the front of the classroom (Greenhouse classroom? Greenroom? Classhouse? Whatever) and took a few moments to introduce him as the “dragon representative, here to spread his knowledge, please be nice,” as if everyone in the school didn’t already know about their existence, *especially* after the pranks they had pulled. It was all worth it to see Jake squirm uncomfortably under the students’ gazes, though, barely taller than Sprout herself and looking like he was trying to hold in another sneeze. He met Danny’s eyes for a moment and shot him a glare that said *I’m going to kill you again for this, Fenton,* a look Danny had often seen directed at him throughout his fifteen years of existence.

“Are there any plants important to Draconic culture, specifically for healing?” Sprout asked him excitedly. “I know your kind come from all around the globe, so practices vary a lot.”

“Uh, yeah, sure,” Jake began, eloquent as always. “I mean, I kinda get a mix of a couple different cultures since my Dragon Master’s Chinese and my healer’s Korean, but I live in New York so a bunch of our supplies are still American-made.”

“Your healer?”

“Sun Park,” Jake elaborated. “She takes care of a lot of the medicine stuff because that’s like her whole deal, she’s super pacifist. Both she and a couple other family members taught me a lot about first aid.” He ran a hand through his hair. “We already have a pretty fast healing rate, but magical shi- uh, stuff definitely helps, yeah. My granddad’s a big fan of tea leaves because that already has a lot of good medicinal properties even without magic, but maybe he does put stuff in there to help, I don’t know. It’s good for sore throats and repairing damage caused by fire breathing.”

A student raised her hand. “You can hurt yourself by fire breathing?”

“If you do it too much, yeah,” Jake said, looking a little relieved at the question, more in his element. Danny held in a snicker; of course *that* would be his expertise, his friend constantly looked about two seconds from committing arson. “And it’s worse in human form, we’re not meant to take fire like that. The fire breathing glands are pretty close to the vocal cords, so overusing them can cause some raspiness and really damage your voice, plus it makes your throat sore, and honey tea is really good for that.”

The vocal cords thing was interesting, Danny mused. He thought back to the times Jake had practiced his fire breathing in the sparring room and remembered the low growls or purrs he’d sometimes do to “warm up,” as he put it (and of course Danny made fun of it for him anyway, because he was an asshole and what were friends for?). If the stuff in his throat that allowed him to
breathe fire wasn’t all magic, no doubt it would have given him a weird biology in his throat.

Oh, jeez, what did that do to his larynx? Were the glands in it, since that was where the vocal cords were held, or just squashed up next to it? And what about his airways? Danny doubted the design would be flawed enough as to let smoke into his lungs, but there hadn’t exactly been any smoke whenever he watched Jake breathe fire, only on impact with other objects, which could easily be attributed to a combustion reaction. And maybe it did cut off his oxygen, since Jake couldn’t hold it forever - in fact, it looked more like he was letting out an enormous breath, inflating his throat shortly and letting it glow with what Danny had assumed to be either chi energy or literal fucking fire before letting loose a torrent of flames.

Jake was a shapeshifter, sure, he had a human body - but it wasn’t really human, not completely, if he had stuff like fire breathing glands and naturally enhanced senses and tougher skin and don’t even get him started on the teeth and ears and eyes because holy shit, dude, you have fangs, and they retract? What are you, fucking Toothless from How to Train Your Dragon? Alright, sorry, don’t hit me, I was joking-!

“We use yarrow a lot in our mixtures to heal wounds,” Jake was saying. “You apply it like a gauze mixed with some other stuff, it speeds up the healing process by a bunch. Oh, and goldenrod for inflammation. That’s more effective, but way more expensive and I live in capitalist America, so. We tend to save.”

Danny had always been interested in chemistry, and admittedly, after his death he had also gotten into a bit of biology as well. How could he not, when the very foundation of what he was had been altered on a molecular level? At first, he hadn’t even known if his cells used cellular respiration anymore due to him not needing oxygen. (They didn’t, at least not in the same way they used to. Ectoplasm worked just fine as an energy converter, it turned out.)

A little wave of excitement made its way into his chest. What about wizards? How did their biological makeup differ from muggles? Holy shit, if he could get someone who couldn’t do magic out here - not like they’d let him, but if he could - then he’d be able to compare their bodies and capabilities. Did wizards have different, say, metabolisms due to them expending energy on magic? Danny’s metabolism had gone way up since his death, but his appetite had diminished. Ectoplasm used up a lot of energy and ate up his nutrients pretty quickly while it stayed in his human body, so he had to eat a lot to replenish it, but sugary foods tended to do more while anything else tasted relatively bland. He was still figuring out the specifics.

But back to wizards - were they even human, compared to muggles?

Before Danny went into a complete nerd shutdown, he turned his attention to the various plants around the room again. The smell didn’t bother him as much anymore, and he could stand to appreciate the various vibrant colors he sat amongst.

Danny leaned back. Jake was still talking, red in the face as he rambled on about some more tea his grandpa liked to make. Evidently he really didn’t know too much about healing, just normal first aid and whatever his healer Sun did to him. Sprout looked a little disappointed at the fact that Jake didn’t seem to know what the fuck he was talking about, but when she sent him back to his seat, he just seemed relieved not to be up there anymore.

“I hate you,” Jake hissed as he flopped back down on his chair. Danny laughed and lightly punched him in the arm.

Jake leaned his head back against the chair and pouted, sticking his lip out and causing one of his longer canines to protrude a bit. The sun was shining through the glass of the greenhouse, starting
to set due to winter quickly approaching - Tucker would have called it *golden hour*, like the video
game nut ever actually went outside to take pictures. The light filtered through the thinner leaves
and threw vibrant colors onto Jake’s still blushing face.

The dragon gave Danny a side eye. “What’s up?”

“How?” Danny blinked and forced himself to look forward again, if only for a moment. “Nothing.”

Jake shrugged and yawned, then laid his forehead against Danny’s shoulder for a moment or two
before righting himself again. “We can leave in just a bit if ya want.”

Something in Danny’s heart had clenched when Jake took his head off his shoulder, and it came
back when he looked at the halfla expectantly, eyes turning the color of molten gold in the light of
the setting sun. Danny didn’t realize he had been staring until Jake rolled his eyes and waved his
hand in front of his face, saying, “Yo, Earth to Casper? Hellowoo? Anybody in there?”

“Yeah, let’s go,” Danny said finally and moved to stand along with Jake. He stretched out his arms
a little while Jake moved past to leave the greenhouse, shooting a quick wave goodbye to Sprout as
he did so. As he caught up to Jake, the shorter boy gave him a half grin, saying something about
the defense club meeting Hermione had invited them to in just a few days. Danny found himself
nodding along, that odd clench in his chest back, and as the two walked back to the castle, a wave
of peace and contentment waved over the halfla.

He really felt… safe, he supposed was the word. Safe, and comfortable, and happy to talk to Jake
and walk with him. It had been a while since he’d really felt like he could be himself around
someone, not feeling the need to hide or hold back anything. Fondness bubbled up in his chest in
place of the tightness, giving him the impression of being truly alive, alive like he never really felt
as often anymore.

Jake’s hand swung by his, and the sudden thought of grabbing it overtook Danny, which was
strange for two reasons: one, he had never had the urge to just grab someone’s hand like that; two,
Jake was a very touchy person and honestly probably wouldn’t mind Danny taking his hand
anyway, but it still felt like a weird thing to do, especially when he was in the midst of talking
about… tea, again. Danny had to hold down another laugh.

“It’s just, Gramps makes me make him so much fucking tea,” Jake was saying as they reached the
entrance to the castle and passed into candlelit stone hallways. “I swear he’s got like an entire
cupboard filled with just tea, and the maniac makes me sort them by flavor too, and it’s not like I
hate tea or anything but it’s getting a little creepy… So excuse me if the only real plant magical
healing properties or whatever is from tea, ‘least I wasn’t going on about essential oils or
something, God, could you imagine…”

*He’s so animated when he talks,* Danny thought, *it’s impossible not to pay attention to him.* Jake
waved his hands around and rolled his eyes while talking so much he reminded Danny a little of a
cartoon character, occasionally running his hands through his hair in the habit Danny had come to
associate with both nerves and excitement. *And it’s all messy now… no wonder he puts so much
gel on, when he touches it that much he’d definitely need extra product to keep it in place. It
doesn’t look bad though, it’s kinda cute when it’s all messy and-

Danny stopped in his tracks (metaphorically speaking, because his legs kept carrying him to
wherever the fuck Jake was going, neither of them really aiming for the boring Room of
Requirement at this point) and thought with horror, *Oh no. Oh, Ancients no. Fuck. Shit. Fuck shit.
Noooo not again. Fuck.*
my search history after the herbology scene was like "throat anatomy" "sore throat??" "what the hell is a larynx" "why do vocal chords look like That" but i gave up on sounding smart in favor of pulling terminology out of my ass so you're welcome, biology nerds

i really like writing lore and i'm hoping to delve into the ghost zone a lot as well as the dragons. sorry if nothing much happened in this one, but i finally finished my outline for this story and i'm fuckin PUMPED bro!!! hope u enjoyed!!

next up DA !!!!

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