

Chapter 58

Chapter Notes

CW for non-graphic mentions of child abuse

Harry and Neville were in the library one cold December evening, working on their Transfiguration homework and quietly discussing the upcoming Christmas holidays.

“I’ve no idea if I’m staying or not, to be honest,” Harry murmured. “I mean, obviously I want to spend it with Sirius. But I’ve not heard anything from anyone about it.” Ginny had mentioned that Ron had been told to invite Harry to the Burrow, but even the thought of having her and the more tolerable Weasley brothers around wasn’t quite enough for Harry to want to spend Christmas with Ron.

“Just get on the train when we all go to leave,” Neville told him, shrugging. “You know where it is. What can they do, send you back?”

Harry didn’t point out that it was entirely likely someone would force him to return to Hogwarts if it had been deemed *safer* for him to remain at the castle, but he didn’t voice that to Neville.

He reached to turn the page of the textbook he was referencing, and a shadow caught the corner of his gaze — he looked up, immediately tensing.

Theodore Nott was stood at the end of the aisle, watching them both.

Harry elbowed Neville, nodding in the Slytherin’s direction. Then he dropped their privacy ward, looking back at the boy as if daring him to make a move.

He hadn’t really spoken much to Nott, despite being in several classes with him. He was one of the students Draco had immediately written off as Death Eater spawn, in far too deep thanks to his father. The hair on the back of Harry’s neck prickled on end, his wand in his hand beneath the table. Pince would murder him if he started a duel in the library, but he wasn’t going to risk being defenceless.

“Can we help you?” he asked calmly. Nott’s response was a quiet, almost disbelieving laugh.

“Fuck, I hope so.”

That wasn’t the response Harry had expected. He blinked, but allowed the boy to walk closer. Nott set his wand on the table, a clear sign of truce. “I need your help, Potter,” he said, dark gaze as wary as a stray cat. “I— my father wants me Marked. This summer.”