

reaching a hand out in friendship? From what he'd learned from Remus and Sirius over the summer, everyone assumed the Slytherin kids were lost to the dark from the moment they were sorted into the house. That's how Voldemort ended up with such a huge following; they had nowhere else to go.

"So that's your grand plan?" Blaise asked with a raised eyebrow. "*Friendship*? You do realise you couldn't sound more Gryffindor if you tried?"

Harry grinned at him. "That's exactly why it's so perfect. Dumbledore couldn't possibly get angry about all his students being *friends*, not without having to face some serious questions." The headmaster would have no choice but to encourage them. "Think about it; all the school-sanctioned clubs are single-house only. Quidditch teams, study groups, hell, even the *gobstones club* is separated by house. It's like they don't want us interacting with each other. Shouldn't they be trying to encourage inter-house unity? We're all supposed to work together once we leave Hogwarts, after all." The only attempt at inter-house cooperation was pairing them together for classes, but even then that often stayed with one house on one side of the classroom and one house on the other.

"It is a bit weird," Parvati agreed. "Even when Padma and I got sorted into different houses, people acted like I was supposed to just stop talking to her. She's my *twin sister*."

"So we make friends, then," Susan declared. "And when the time is right, we start up the study group."

"We can start small," Neville suggested, balking a little as every eye in the room turned to him. "Asking to borrow a quill, complimenting someone's hair. Being nice to Slytherins. It'll look weird if we all suddenly want to be best friends with people outside our houses."

"Neville's got a point," Harry agreed. "We don't want to look suspicious."

"I hope you aren't expecting me to be *nice* to people, Potter," Daphne drawled. Harry snorted.

"Wouldn't dream of it," he replied sweetly. "Just be a bitch to everyone equally and you'll be fine." That made Daphne laugh. After a summer writing letters to the Slytherin girl, Harry was pretty sure he had a handle on her particular brand of humour.

"If we're starting a study group, can we start now?" Sullivan asked, glancing around the group. "You've all done third year Transfiguration. This essay on mammal transformations is doing my head in."

It turned out a lot of them had brought their books with them, having come straight from lessons, and it was an easy transition to working together. Most of them were fourth years, after all. Cassius, the one sixth year of the group, was saved when he admitted he had Herbology homework, and Neville jumped at the chance to help with the advanced work. It made Harry smile to watch his shy Gryffindor friend slowly gain confidence as he explained things to Cassius, who took diligent notes.

Maybe it wouldn't be so hard after all.