

“We have some other news,” Theo said, his hand in Susan’s and his hazel eyes bright. “I got a letter from my family solicitor this morning. My father was one of the people killed in the Ministry yesterday.”

Harry tensed. What could he say to that? Theo seemed to sense his dilemma, as he gave a sharklike grin. “Don’t apologise; he was a piece of shit and he deserves to be dead. But the better news is, once I turn seventeen in January, I’ll be free. And, like most idiot Death Eaters, his will handed both my guardianship and the house proxy over to Lord Malfoy — which in his absence goes to Lady Malfoy.” He turned his grin on Draco. “Looks like we’re foster-brothers until January.”

Draco laughed. “Congratulations. Welcome to the family, I suppose.”

“I can go back home, when this is over.” The awe in Theo’s voice was palpable.

“I’m happy for you,” Harry said sincerely. Theo nodded to him.

“I wouldn’t have lasted this far without your protection, Harry,” he said solemnly. “I’m in your debt.”

“There are no debts between friends,” Harry corrected, smiling. Theo blinked. Then, slowly, he smiled too.

“Okay, then.”

“Have you heard from the girls?” Blaise cut in, frowning. Theo shook his head.

“Got a letter from Millie a week into summer, nothing since. Ever since Draco and I defected, I think her dad is reading her letters.”

Harry felt Draco’s shoulders tighten at his side. “I hate that we’ve left them to put up with Crabbe and Goyle, and Tracey Davis.”

“You and me, both,” Theo agreed. “But they’re safer that way. We all are. The Dark Lord needs to feel like he’s got some kind of foothold in the school.”

“Did Susan tell you about...?” Harry trailed off, and Theo nodded.

“Doesn’t surprise me the Ravenclaws got turned first. They’ve always been closest to Slytherin.”

“We’ll have to keep an eye out.” There were bound to be more students in all houses with parents who had turned, and possibly even some students who had turned entirely independently of their families. Harry wasn’t so naive to think that Voldemort’s rhetoric wasn’t appealing to certain types of people.

Namely, people who were sick of Albus Dumbledore’s bullshit.

This year, Harry would change that. He would offer an alternate option to both, and perhaps he could save a few souls from being Marked.