

They made to leave, and Harry reached out for a second. “Wait! Don’t— don’t tell Dumbledore. Don’t let him know.” They shared a glance, then looked back at him.

“Dumbledore holds too many seats that aren’t rightfully his,” Susan said darkly, a knowing glint in her eyes. “Don’t worry, Harry. Your secret’s safe with us.”

Watching the girls walk off, Harry blinked, bewildered. “When you said there were others, I didn’t realise there were that many.” Neville grinned sheepishly.

“Yeah, well. We’re the year for it. Like I was saying, it’s our job to secure the family future. They want to make sure we have the best opportunities to start networking. Have you ever noticed how most of the Slytherins leave me alone? Even Malfoy’s not as bad with me as he is with the rest of you. Though this year, he only really seems to be after Ron.”

Harry had noticed that, too; Malfoy barely said anything to Harry unless Ron started the fight. Instead he’d taken to giving Harry calculated looks across the room, like he couldn’t quite figure him out.

“If this whole heir thing keeps the Slytherins off my back, it could be worth it after all,” Harry teased, pulling the book a little closer. Neville laughed.

“I don’t think even being the Potter heir could fix that completely.”

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When Gorrak had warned Harry to be wary of his magic in the months following the removal of the block, Harry hadn’t expected it to be quite so itchy. He constantly felt like he was vibrating out of his skin, his magic building and begging to be used. He was picking things up in class faster than he’d ever done before — faster than Hermione, even, sometimes. He’d have to get a handle on that, or he’d be found out in a second.

For some reason, walking seemed to help. Most nights Harry put on his invisibility cloak and slipped out of the common room, strolling the halls of Hogwarts in the darkness. For once, he wasn’t even up to something. It just felt like the walking was soothing him — the castle was soothing him. Deep down, he wondered if it was something to do with being the heir of Slytherin, if the castle recognised him somehow. It sounded stupid, but people always said Hogwarts felt like it was alive.

He’d taken his cloak off as he walked through the courtyard, wanting to feel the wind ruffling his hair. He knew he was being foolish. There was a murderer out looking for him, and here he was walking around by himself at night. But he just couldn’t stay still. He’d rather walk for an hour or two than spend the whole night tossing and turning. Besides, with the dementors around, Black wouldn’t be getting into Hogwarts.

There was a flash of silver, and Harry swore under his breath as he turned the corner to see familiar blond hair. “What are you doing out after curfew, Potter?”

“I could say the same to you, Malfoy,” Harry argued. Malfoy rolled his eyes.