

For a moment, Draco looked like he might protest, but then his shoulders slumped. “I want to keep you safe, you idiot.”

Harry reached for his hand. “You can do that by staying here, where I won’t be worried about you.” It was far too dangerous for Draco to risk being seen at Harry’s side.

“I’ll keep him safe,” Susan said, stepping forward with determination. “If you’ll have me, Harry.”

He grinned at her — she was fierce with a wand, and he wasn’t going to turn that down.

“If Luna’s going, I suppose I’m coming too,” Daphne sighed. “They’re already after my uncle anyway. Can’t make it much worse.”

“Daphne, you don’t have to.”

“No, but I’m going to,” the blonde girl said before Harry could argue. “Blaise needs to stay here. He needs to be the approachable face for the neutral Slytherins; he can’t be seen rushing into danger at Harry Potter’s side. But I can.” She smirked, and for a brief moment Harry pitied anyone who ended up on the other end of her wand that night.

No one else in the room looked eager to volunteer themselves, and Harry put them out of their misery before they felt pressured into trying. “The rest of you need to stay here and keep Umbridge distracted,” he told them. “She’s going to raise hell once she realises I’m gone, and if there’s trouble at the Ministry things could get messy. Dumbledore and McGonagall are both gone, the school is unprotected.”

“Not with us around it’s not,” Parvati told him, showing her Gryffindor spirit. Harry was glad; between them and the HA, any real damage would surely be mitigated.

He pushed away the small part of him that was worried the Death Eaters were planning a double-hit, Ministry and Hogwarts while they were both unguarded. They surely didn’t have the numbers for that, not yet.

Still holding Draco’s hand, Harry pulled him aside, and everyone pretended not to notice them the same way they didn’t notice Theo with his forehead pressed to Susan’s, whispering to her beseechingly.

“Tell Snape where I’m going, as soon as we’ve gone,” Harry whispered. “The Order is elsewhere, but I’ve spoken to Sirius, and he’s going to try and get in touch so they can follow.”

“That’s relying on an awful lot of hope,” Draco murmured, and Harry just grinned, kissing him.

“I’m Harry Potter; blind hope tends to work out pretty well for me.” Draco was not impressed, but he pulled Harry into a proper kiss, his tongue reaching into Harry’s mouth like he didn’t ever want to be separated. But they had to, eventually, and Harry hugged him tight. “I love you.”