

His words were heavy with magic, and Neville gasped softly. Harry set down his wand, laying his free hand on top of Nott's. "I appreciate your vow, and will honour your debt." His own magic sealed the deal.

If Nott planned to betray him, he was going to have a bloody hard time of it.

"Talk to Daphne," he repeated, then offered a small smile. "I'll see you in class."

Recognising the dismissal for what it was, Nott nodded, pulling back and reaching for his wand. "Potter, Longbottom. Sorry for disturbing you," he said, as if he'd just asked about borrowing a book or something equally mundane. Then he was gone.

Harry looked at Neville, who was wide-eyed in shock. "I think I just made a new friend," he said, and grinned.

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Through the whisper network, Harry heard enough to be prepared by the next heirs study group meeting. He wasn't as shocked as the others when Theodore Nott walked in beside Daphne and Blaise. The tall boy still looked like a cornered animal, but there was a glimmer of hope in his eyes that Harry recognised painfully well.

He'd spoken to Snape, the same day Nott had come to him for help. The man had confirmed that Theodore Nott Sr was exactly the violent, odious piece of shit that Theodore Jr made him out to be. Snape had not been at all surprised to hear that his student was being threatened with the Cruciatus into joining Voldemort, only resigned. He had been earnest in his request for Harry to hold firm to his promise of sanctuary, even if Nott didn't get along so well with his other friends.

With that in mind, for this first meeting Harry had suggested that Cassius, Draco and the girls skip this one. If Nott got cold feet, they didn't want him to have the knowledge that four more children of Death Eaters were not loyal.

At least the other heirs seemed to have been similarly forewarned; they eyed Nott warily, but none looked shocked to see him there.

"Welcome," Harry greeted, beckoning him further into the room. "Can I call you Theodore? Or do you prefer something else?"

"Uh— Theo. Theo's fine," the boy stuttered, caught off-guard by Harry's lack of hesitation.

"Great. Call me Harry, Theo," he urged. "I don't know how much Blaise and Daphne have told you, but this is our study group."

"They said you're all planning on overthrowing both Fudge and Dumbledore, once Potter — Harry, sorry — once Harry kills the Dark Lord." Theo sounded deeply impressed, and also quite skeptical. "That you're going to completely rebuild the Ministry from the ground up, starting with the Wizengamot." Then he grinned, a predatory, gleaming-eyed thing. "I want in."