

into the back room. “How did everything go last week?” he asked, voice low and urgent. It took Harry a moment to figure out what he was referring to.

“Oh, that. Yeah, went smoothly. Everyone you sent my way is where they should be. Haven’t you heard from Theo?”

Blaise shook his head. “I think he got too focused worrying about Susan, after the attack was reported in the paper. I only know he’s fine because she told me.” He scoffed. “Lovestruck little idiot that he is.”

“Pot, kettle,” Harry retorted, smirking.

“Don’t start fights you won’t win, Potter,” came Blaise’s immediate retort. “I’ve seen you and Draco.”

Harry had to concede there.

“Speaking of, I assume you’ve heard about what happened at the Manor?”

Harry wasn’t sure how *Blaise* had heard, but he nodded all the same. “Mrs Malfoy claimed Lucius’ proxy seats before Sirius’ trial yesterday,” he explained. “I think her votes in his favour were the only reason he won, actually.” If all those seats had been down as abstaining, it might not have been enough.

“She’s certainly making her stance clear,” Blaise agreed, impressed. “I’ve heard a few rumours, down Knockturn way; there were a few darker families under a bit of pressure to join up, but several of them seemed to have mysteriously disappeared, with all their belongings. Current theory is they’ve moved in with the Malfoys.”

Harry’s eyebrows rose; Draco’s letter hadn’t said anything about that. “What makes you think that?”

“They’re all women from Mrs Malfoy’s social circle — women with family members in His service, but who have never pledged themselves. A few men, too. And their kids of course. I can’t think of anything else that would have such a prominent collection of dark socialites vanishing all at the same time.”

“Hopefully it’s not for more sinister reasons.” If Narcissa was rescuing people who were stuck in the same position she once had been, more power to her. “I should get to see Draco soon; I’ll give him your regards, and see if I can get some answers for you.”

“Please do. I’ll send you some names, too — Mrs Malfoy may be able to look into them. They’re kids I know are struggling, but they’re not in the position to help themselves. If she can do anything...” Blaise’s face was drawn, and Harry nodded.

Even if Narcissa couldn’t do anything, maybe Harry could, or even Snape.

The curtain to the back room was suddenly pulled back, and George peered in at them, smirking. “Oi, go back to your own snake, Potter,” he teased. “This one’s taken.” He slung an arm around Blaise’s waist, kissing him.