

the quidditch practice times, and he wanted to move as quickly as possible. He raised his wand, carefully etching a short phrase into the silver plate on the bottom.

*‘Thursday 7PM. Library, row 82’*

There. That would certainly keep them guessing.

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In the morning, he was ambushed by Ginny as soon as he and Neville entered the common room. “We can’t do it in the library!” she hissed, her sentence earning raised eyebrows from a couple of sixth-years walking past at the time. Harry flushed despite himself. “Pince will have our heads!”

“It’s not exactly hiding,” Neville agreed doubtfully. Harry grinned at them both.

“The pair of you, no faith at all,” he said mock-sadly, shaking his head. “We aren’t going to do anything in the library. That’s just the least suspicious place for everyone to go in the evening.” Umbridge couldn’t ban students from the library, not so close to exams.

“So what, you just wanted to talk to everyone?” Ginny asked, brows furrowed. Again, Harry shook his head.

“I have a place we can go, and we can get there from the library. It’s a little... unorthodox. But it’s more secure than even the Room was.”

All of a sudden, Ginny stopped in her tracks, realisation dawning on her face. “Harry, tell me you didn’t,” she murmured, voice wavering.

“It’s not scary anymore, Gin, I promise,” he assured her, reaching out to squeeze her hand. “I swear; I cleaned it up, there’s no trace of it all left, and I wouldn’t be taking anyone down there if I weren’t absolutely confident of that.” He’d even scrubbed off the black ink stain on the floor.

Ginny bit her lip. “You’re absolutely sure?”

“Positive,” he swore without hesitation. “You won’t be alone down there, Gin. Not again.”

Neville was following the whole exchange, confused and a little bit suspicious. When he opened his mouth, both Harry and Ginny shook their heads; they couldn’t talk about it, even in a corridor that seemed empty.

They could never be sure when people were listening.

Ginny wasn’t the only one with questions, but the rest of the HA were wisely keeping them to themselves over breakfast, Umbridge sat upon Dumbledore’s old throne-like seat, smiling down at them like a medieval queen wondering which of her servants to behead next.

Harry kept his rage quietly burning through the day, right up until dinner time. Neville bid goodbye to head off to his detention, looking extra morose — he was going to be missing the