

“Appearances must be upheld,” Malfoy agreed. Harry’s mind flashed back to the terrified look on the blond’s face all those months ago in the hospital wing, when he’d admitted what the dementors made him see. He was starting to think maybe Malfoy had more on the line than Harry himself did.

Slowly, Harry reached out a hand, looking into silver-grey eyes. “No one needs to know about this, though. Not in private.” He tilted his head, lips curving in a smile, remembering two boys; smaller, younger, entirely oblivious to the truth of the other.

Malfoy hesitantly extended his own hand, but his grip was firm when his fingers curled around Harry’s. “Draco Malfoy,” he said, as if introducing himself for the first time. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Harry Potter,” he returned, grinning. “I think we’re going to be great friends, Draco Malfoy.” Letting go of the other boy’s hand, Harry glanced at his watch. “Speaking of appearances, I should get back to the party before someone notices I’m gone.” He got to his feet, stifling a sigh. If only he could stay in the quiet with Malfoy a little longer. “Hey, can we start doing this on purpose?”

Malfoy stared at him blankly. “Are you saying you just befriended me by accident?”

“No,” Harry snorted, rolling his eyes. “I meant meeting up. Instead of just randomly bumping into each other. We’d have to be careful, obviously, but... I feel like a Slytherin perspective to all this heir stuff is exactly what I need. No one ever taught me how to be a pureblood.” And if he wanted the excuse to spend more time with his new friend, well, Malfoy didn’t have to know that.

“I suppose. Someone has to make sure you don’t embarrass yourself once you start representing your houses,” Malfoy replied drily. Harry read between the lines, and grinned.

“Great. I’ll, uh, see you around. Draco.”

The blond blinked at him, taken-aback. A small, reluctant smile flittered across his face. “See you, Harry. Good luck with all your adoring lions.”

Harry went back to Gryffindor tower with a spring in his step and a smile on his face, that couldn’t be dragged down even when Ron started making snide remarks about Hermione.

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Remus watched the flames in his fireplace fade from green back to orange, as Professor McGonagall bid him a harried goodnight. The entire castle had been searched, and there was no sign of him. Whatever had happened in the Gryffindor common room, Sirius was gone.

His hands shook. His cup of tea had long gone cold, and he heated it back up with a wave of his wand, hoping it might calm his nerves. His eyes strayed to the door, wondering if Severus was going to come bursting in, accusing him of helping Sirius break into the castle. Remus honestly wouldn’t blame him if he did.