

summer. A place where your father and Voldemort can't get to you." Harry would have to write to the goblins and change around some of his plans, but it was doable.

The relief that flooded the Slytherin boy was visible, as he slumped in his chair like a ragdoll. "Thank you," he rasped. "What do you ask in return?"

"Nothing," Harry replied, shaking his head. "I don't help people because I want something. I help people because they need it."

That seemed an utterly foreign concept to Nott. Harry didn't hold it against him; even Draco still struggled with the idea. Slytherins just did not think that way. "I will, however, ask for your silence, and your loyalty. Not like him," he hastened to add, seeing the way the Slytherin tensed. "But if you're going to be on my side — or, at the very least, not on Voldemort's side — you're going to learn some things that would be absolutely dire for anyone else to discover. How's your Occlumency?"

"Impeccable," Nott responded immediately. "My father likes to rip my mind apart for any signs of *wavering loyalty*. I wouldn't have survived this long without solid shields."

His matter-of-fact tone made Harry's stomach turn. "Good. And— you're the heir to two Wizengamot seats, correct? Nott and Avery?"

"Harry, are you sure?" Neville hissed in alarm. "That's an awful lot of trust to put in him."

Harry nodded; he knew that. But he had a gut feeling that Nott was worth that trust.

If only he could ask Snape to test the boy without revealing the Potions Master's loyalty.

"I'll be eligible for both when I turn seventeen, yes. But my father holds them right now." Nott's eyes were calculating, looking between the two. "If it's political clout you're after, I can help." He smiled viciously. "If it requires my father to have an unfortunate and lethal accident, even better."

Harry wasn't quite sure what to do with all that bloodthirsty energy, but that was good to know. "Talk to Daphne Greengrass," he said eventually, thinking that the female Slytherin would be devious enough to spot if Nott was trying to play him. "Tell her I said she should think about bringing you to study group."

Nott blinked, looking perplexed. "If I do that, you'll give me sanctuary?"

"I'll give you sanctuary regardless," Harry promised. "This will just... help with some other things."

If he could be trusted, it would be worth having him on board. Two more seats would be an enormous help.

"Thank you." Nott reached over, clasping Harry's hand in both of his own. "I am in your debt, Heir Potter. Should I betray this trust, let Magic punish me as it must."