

that.” She patted his cheek once more. “You have far too much love for the boy to do that. So get back in there, face your godfather, and fail a thousand more times at his wand now, so you will not fail at someone else’s later.”

“I—“ Draco swallowed thickly. “What if it’s still not enough?” What if even his best couldn’t keep Harry safe?

“Then that is the way the world must be,” Narcissa replied without hesitation. “We cannot control everything, my darling. We can only control ourselves. And you *certainly* can’t control Harry Potter.” She smirked at him. “Your father only taught you that Malfoys don’t fail because he never dared try anything he couldn’t immediately succeed at. You’re a Black, darling; you’re better than that.”

Then she kissed him on the cheek, and stepped back. “Do you see, now?”

A pause, and then Draco nodded. “I do. Thank you.”

His mother smiled, nudging him back towards the door, and went on her way. Draco reached for the handle, determination burning through his blood.

He would be better.

.-.-.-.

Longbottom manor was *huge*.

Ginny’s hands clenched anxiously around the handles of her bag as she stood in the elaborate entrance hall, staring at the grand curving staircase in front of her. “Ginny! You made it!”

She turned, unable to help the smile that flooded her face at the sight of her boyfriend. He was a little windswept, a faint smudge of dirt on his cheek — he’d been out with his plants again, most likely. “Sorry, I lost track of time,” he admitted sheepishly, leaning down to kiss her. Ginny relaxed into the kiss, then tensed, pulling back.

“Where’s your gran?” she asked in alarm, eyes darting around as if the woman would pop out of nowhere, vulture hat and all. Neville just laughed.

“She’s off playing cards with your Aunt Muriel,” he explained. “She’ll be back for dinner, don’t worry. Oh.” He glanced down. “Posy!” A house elf appeared suddenly, wearing a pretty pale blue dress. “Posy, this is Ginny. Would you take her bag to her room for me, please?”

“Of course, Master Neville!” the elf chirped happily, and Ginny awkwardly set the bag down for the elf to take.

She’d never visited anyone who had a house elf, before. Sometimes she forgot just how old-money pureblood Neville was.

The elf vanished with her bag, and Neville beamed at her, holding out a hand. “Come on, I’ll show you around.”