

“Blimey,” he said when Harry finally finished. “I thought it was bad when you told me about the magic block. You have been busy, haven’t you?” Harry snorted.

“Just a bit, yeah,” he agreed. “So you see where I’m at. I need to start getting things together — I can’t just sit around and wait until Dumbledore reveals his plan. I can’t let him get away with stealing my money *and* my magic. I have to be ready to reveal it on my own terms.”

“Well however me and Gran can help, we’d be happy to,” Neville assured without hesitation. Harry’s shoulders slumped in relief. “I figured you weren’t at your muggle relatives this summer, from some of the things you said in your letters. But... I’m glad you’ve got somewhere to go that’s safe, where you’re happy.” Harry raised an eyebrow at him, and Neville’s gaze grew pointed. “I’ve seen the bruises, Harry, and the scars. And I can tell from the way you talk about them. Those muggles aren’t good people.”

Harry grimaced; he hadn’t realised Neville had seen so much. The boy was more observant than anyone gave him credit for. “All that doesn’t matter, now,” he dismissed, not wanting to get into it about the Dursleys. “I won’t have to stay with them for more than a day or so, hopefully.”

“That’s good,” Neville agreed. He grew pensive for a moment. “This is serious, isn’t it, Harry? Like, world-changing serious.”

“Yeah, you could say that.” Harry bit his lip. “Look, Nev, if you want to stay out of it, I completely understand. Being around me is always a bit chaotic, but things are only going to get worse.”

“Shut up, Harry.” The force in Neville’s voice made Harry blink, taken-aback. “I might not be the bravest Gryffindor around, but you’re my friend, and what’s happening to you isn’t right. Dumbledore— he can’t be allowed to just keep doing whatever he wants and manipulating people for the Greater Good. I’ve been thinking about it ever since you told me what he did last year. I can’t promise to be much help, but I’m in this with you, whether you like it or not.”

Harry had never seen Neville so firm about anything — he was starting to see what the Sorting Hat had in mind when he put Neville in the house of lions. “Okay, then,” he said eventually. “That’s— yeah. Thanks, Nev.” Neville was blushing now, and Harry smiled. “You’ve already been loads of help. I wouldn’t have learned Occlumency without you, and your gran. I was going to write to her, actually — when I make my move, when it all comes out, I’ll need to change my Wizengamot proxy. If we can’t get Sirius’ name cleared... d’you... would she be willing?” He couldn’t take the Slytherin seat from Dumbledore’s hands, but he could take the other three.

“She’d be honoured, Harry,” Neville assured. Harry grinned; that was one load off his mind. It wouldn’t happen for a while yet, but it was good to know he had something in place.

“Good. And—” he paused, hesitant. “I’ve been thinking about telling the other heirs the truth. About Dumbledore, and even Sirius. If I can get them on my side, it’ll be easier to get him out of power when— when I need to.” It made him a little queasy, the thought of actively conspiring against the headmaster, but it would need to happen eventually. The wizarding