

into it.”

They put their hands on the wardstone as one, and Draco gasped faintly, feeling the wards rush through him; echoes of centuries of Malfoys past, tangling with his own magic, judging his worth. He pushed forward everything he had — his strength, his power, even his love for Harry. Anything that might aid his mother in securing their home, proving to the wards that those within were not worthy of the sanctuary of Malfoy magic.

For several long minutes, nothing happened. Then, slowly, he felt it. A rushing in his blood, a vibration in the stones below his feet. His heartbeat pulsing in time with his mother’s, in time with the wardstone, all of their magic combining to flood through the house and out all the way to the boundary line. It felt solid, like a shield surrounding the whole property. But the magic felt... expectant.

It needed more than just his magic, to hold such powerful wards.

Instinctively, Draco pulled his wand, keeping one hand on the wardstone. With a spell, that hand cut open from the base of his thumb to the curve of his wrist, and the wardstone flashed bright white as his blood touched the warm surface. The wards gave an extra firm pulse, and then it released him.

He and his mother stood, breathing hard, Draco’s hand still dripping blood onto the floor.

“Well done, darling,” Narcissa murmured, carefully healing his wound. “I think we did it.”

Draco could see the tremble in her arm as she reached to push the door open. If they hadn’t succeeded, they would soon be dead.

But it looked like their gamble had paid off. Walking through the dining room, everything was silent. In the hallway, Narcissa cleared her throat. “Dippy,” she called out, and a house elf appeared. “Have our visitors gone?”

Watching the elf nod made Draco’s shoulders crumple in relief. “Missy Cissa and Master Draco is the only peoples in the house, Miss,” Dippy confirmed. A satisfied smile took over the Lady Malfoy’s face.

“Wonderful. Clean up any rooms that were previously occupied, would you? I want no trace of them left. Put their belongings in the Lord’s office, I’ll deal with them later.”

The elf vanished, and only then did Narcissa relax. “They’re going to kill you,” Draco said fearfully, reaching for her hand. “The moment you step foot outside, they’ll kill you.”

Far from alarmed, that just made her smirk wider. “Have a little faith, darling. I know how to play this game.” She brought his hand up to her lips, kissing his knuckles. “This has been long overdue. But it’s a start. There is much more work to be done.” She met his gaze unflinching. “Your Harry is making good progress, but there are certain moves that can only be made by someone rather more experienced in the ways of these things. And we will aid him however we can. He is family, after all.”