

to rally behind the Hogwarts champion, whoever it ended up being. That would be a good start.

He ignored Ron and Hermione bickering about house elves and stood up, making a vague excuse about needing to get his Herbology book. As soon as he could, he'd have to get the heirs gathered and start tossing ideas around; between them they could surely think of something.

Baby steps, but they'd get there eventually. He was playing a dangerous game, going against Dumbledore right under the man's nose. But as much as Harry had promised Sirius he wouldn't go looking for trouble, he wouldn't just sit and do *nothing*. Whatever Dumbledore's plan for Harry was, it was clearly supposed to come to a head before he turned seventeen; the goblins had assured him that with the block on his core, Harry wouldn't have survived his coming of age. That meant he was running out of time to get the upper hand.

He'd spent most of last year keeping his head down. It was time to get the pieces moving.

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That night, Harry donned his invisibility cloak and made his way towards the fourth floor Charms room, grinning when he saw Draco waiting for him, deck of cards in hand. The blond perked up when Harry removed the cloak. "You're late," he reprimanded, and Harry offered an apologetic look.

"Ron wouldn't go to sleep," he explained. "Are you alright?" Harry was still a little shaken from watching Moody turn Draco into a ferret and bounce him all over the hall. Ron thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever seen, but Harry was horrified a teacher would use that sort of magic on a student. He was glad McGonagall seemed equally horrified.

"I'm fine. Uncle Severus gave me something for the bruises," Draco assured. "It's just my pride that's wounded."

"Moody's a dick," Harry declared. He paused, thoughts turning to graver matters. "How did things go after— after the Cup?"

"It could've been worse. Father was fairly happy with how things went at the Cup; no one got caught, and with all those articles that bloody Skeeter woman put out it's certainly made it memorable." Harry made a face; that was an understatement. "But... Harry, I heard some things this summer. Father... Father said the Dark Lord is coming back."

Harry pursed his lips, staying silent. Wishing he could assure Draco it wasn't true. The blond's face crumbled. "We don't know how, or when," Harry said quickly. "But it's inevitable now. Snape says his Mark is getting darker." He told Draco about the prophecy Trelawney had made at the end of the year before, and how Wormtail was probably with Voldemort now, judging by the dream he'd had.

Not only did Draco know most of Harry's secrets — he was the only one of Harry's friends who knew about Seren Du, after all — but between his father and Dumbledore he was