

walking the tightrope almost as much as Harry was. It was a relief, being able to talk freely with someone who *understood*.

By the end of it, Draco was even paler than usual. Both of them had abandoned their cards, and Harry's foot was bouncing anxiously. He was aware that in this particular circumstances, Draco was in far more danger than Harry. "If he comes back, what if— what if Father tries to make me join him?"

Harry reached across the table, taking Draco's hand tightly in his own. "I won't let anything happen to you, or your mother," he vowed. "You can come hide at Seren Du if it comes down to it. No one will find you there. And even if he does come back, surely your father won't expect you to do anything until you're of age?"

Draco scoffed, looking bleak. "You don't know my father."

"If he wants you, he'll have to go through me," Harry declared fiercely. Draco met his gaze with a hesitant smile, then his eyes dropped down to their joined hands. Harry blushed, letting go and hastily picking up his cards.

Voldemort wasn't getting to Draco. Not if he had anything to say about it. Draco was Harry's.

Harry was only just starting to realise how desperately he wanted that to be true.

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Thanks to a note passed to Hannah in Herbology, and another to Daphne in Transfiguration, Harry managed to have all the trustworthy heirs meet him in one of the abandoned sixth floor classrooms after dinner the first Thursday back. He made an excuse to Ron and Hermione about having detention with Snape — a cover the man would probably be happy to corroborate if needed — and hurried up to the little-used corridor, slipping into the room after checking no one was watching him.

He seemed to be the last one there. He looked around the familiar faces; eleven of them in total, twelve including him. Harry was amused to realise that between them, they had an equal number from each house. "What's this about, Potter?" Cassius Warrington asked, leaning back in his chair, eyebrows raised. Harry perched on the edge of the teacher's desk, eyeing the group.

"Partly I just wanted to check in, see how everyone was doing. I know a lot of you were at the Cup. But mostly... mostly I had an idea, and I was wondering if you would be willing to help me."

Eleven faces stared at him expectantly. "Voldemort is coming back," he declared. Several people gasped. "Don't ask me how I know. Just call it special Boy-Who-Lived sense." He tapped at his scar pointedly, hoping that was enough of an explanation. He couldn't exactly tell them he'd seen Professor Snape's Dark Mark and it was growing clearer. Or that he'd watched Peter Pettigrew escape and Professor Trelawney had predicted he would aid Voldemort back to power. They'd think he was bonkers. "I don't know how long it'll take, but it's coming. We can't afford to wait until we're all of age to start making changes."