

“Yes... why?”

“Would you mind coming with me for a minute? It’s important.” Neville wouldn’t meet his eye, a curiously determined look on his face. Harry was intrigued.

“Yeah, sure.” Wondering what he was about to get himself into, he let Neville lead him past the library and behind a tapestry, into a room Harry had never seen before. To his surprise, they weren’t alone.

Susan Bones was there, and Hannah Abbott; but so were Ernie Macmillan and both the Patil twins; Anthony Goldstein; Sullivan Fawley in the year below; and even, to his utter shock, a trio of Slytherins in the corner. Cassius Warrington, looking somewhat uncomfortable. Daphne Greengrass and Blaise Zabini. All of them had their palms open, and all of them bowed their heads when Harry and Neville entered. Murmurs of ‘well met’ echoed through the room, and Neville ducked his head formally.

“Well met,” he greeted. When he straightened up, it was with square shoulders and a confident stance that was entirely at odds with the shy, fumbling Neville Longbottom that Harry knew.

“Well met,” Harry followed, keeping his palms out as he was supposed to. “What am I doing here?”

“We thought we’d all introduce ourselves properly,” Ernie Macmillan drawled. “Before the school year’s over and we all leave for the summer. There’s been all this talk about the Potter heir finally stepping into society, we thought it’d be nice to welcome you in.”

Harry froze in alarm. “What talk?” he asked sharply. “You can’t be talking. Dumbledore can’t know I know about my inheritance.” He winced as soon as he said it — giving away way too many of his cards at once there — but no one in the group looked all that surprised.

“Relax, Potter,” Greengrass called across the room. “We keep our talk safe within the right circles. Dumbledore doesn’t know a thing.” She folded her arms across her chest, eyeing him coolly. “Am I to assume that he wouldn’t take well to the news?”

“That’s... an understatement,” Harry sighed.

“Professor Dumbledore has taken some pretty strong measures to keep Harry away from us. From this,” Neville said, studying the gathered teens.

“I can’t say I’m surprised,” Goldstein muttered.

“Regardless, welcome,” Hannah Abbott said with a smile, gesturing to a couple of empty chairs. Harry and Neville both sat down. “Harry, this is all the heirs currently at Hogwarts — well, most of us. There’s a few more — Slytherins we don’t trust, and the Carrow twins are due to start next year, but for now, this is us.”

“Isn’t Malfoy an heir?” Harry asked, glancing at the other Slytherins. How could they be trusted, but not Draco?