

Snape, like Flitwick, started the class by taking the roll call, and like Flitwick, he paused at Harry's name.

"Ah, *yes*," he said softly, "Harry Potter. Our new — *celebrity*."

Draco Malfoy and his friends Crabbe and Goyle sniggered behind their hands. Snape finished calling the names and looked up at the class. His eyes were black like Hagrid's, but they had none of Hagrid's warmth. They were cold and empty and made you think of dark tunnels.

"You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion-making," he began. He spoke in barely more than a whisper, but they caught every word — like Professor McGonagall, Snape had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses. ... I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death — if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach."

More silence followed this little speech. Harry and Ron exchanged looks with raised eyebrows. Hermione Granger was on the edge of her seat and looked desperate to start proving that she wasn't a dunderhead.

"Potter!" said Snape suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

*Powdered root of what to an infusion of what?* Harry glanced at Ron, who looked as stumped as he was; Hermione's hand had shot into the air.

"I don't know, sir," said Harry.

Snape's lips curled into a sneer.

"Tut, tut — fame clearly isn't everything."

He ignored Hermione's hand.