



## CHAPTER EIGHT



“Transfiguration is some of the most complex and dangerous magic you will learn at Hogwarts,” she said. “Anyone messing around in my class will leave and not come back. You have been warned.”

Then she changed her desk into a pig and back again. They were all very impressed and couldn’t wait to get started, but soon realized they weren’t going to be changing the furniture into animals for a long time. After taking a lot of complicated notes, they were each given a match and started trying to turn it into a needle. By the end of the lesson, only Hermione Granger had made any difference to her match; Professor McGonagall showed the class how it had gone all silver and pointy and gave Hermione a rare smile.

The class everyone had really been looking forward to was Defense Against the Dark Arts, but Quirrell’s lessons turned out to be a bit of a joke. His classroom smelled strongly of garlic, which everyone said was to ward off a vampire he’d met in Romania and was afraid would be coming back to get him one of these days. His turban, he told them, had been given to him by an African prince as a thank-you for getting rid of a troublesome zombie, but they weren’t sure they believed this story. For one thing, when Seamus Finnigan asked eagerly to hear how Quirrell had fought off the zombie, Quirrell went pink and started talking about the weather; for another, they had noticed that a funny smell hung around the turban, and the Weasley twins insisted that it was stuffed full of garlic as well, so that Quirrell was protected wherever he went.

Harry was very relieved to find out that he wasn’t miles behind everyone else. Lots of people had come from Muggle families and, like him, hadn’t had any idea that they were witches and wizards.



## THE POTIONS MASTER



There was so much to learn that even people like Ron didn't have much of a head start.

Friday was an important day for Harry and Ron. They finally managed to find their way down to the Great Hall for breakfast without getting lost once.

"What have we got today?" Harry asked Ron as he poured sugar on his porridge.

"Double Potions with the Slytherins," said Ron. "Snape's Head of Slytherin House. They say he always favors them — we'll be able to see if it's true."

"Wish McGonagall favored us," said Harry. Professor McGonagall was head of Gryffindor House, but it hadn't stopped her from giving them a huge pile of homework the day before.

Just then, the mail arrived. Harry had gotten used to this by now, but it had given him a bit of a shock on the first morning, when about a hundred owls had suddenly streamed into the Great Hall during breakfast, circling the tables until they saw their owners, and dropping letters and packages onto their laps.

Hedwig hadn't brought Harry anything so far. She sometimes flew in to nibble his ear and have a bit of toast before going off to sleep in the owlery with the other school owls. This morning, however, she fluttered down between the marmalade and the sugar bowl and dropped a note onto Harry's plate. Harry tore it open at once. It said, in a very untidy scrawl:

Dear Harry,

I know you get Friday afternoons off so would you like to come and have a cup of tea with me around three?



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I want to hear all about your first week. Send us an answer back with Hedwig.

Hagrid

Harry borrowed Ron's quill, scribbled *Yes, please, see you later* on the back of the note, and sent Hedwig off again.

It was lucky that Harry had tea with Hagrid to look forward to, because the Potions lesson turned out to be the worst thing that had happened to him so far.

At the start-of-term banquet, Harry had gotten the idea that Professor Snape disliked him. By the end of the first Potions lesson, he knew he'd been wrong. Snape didn't dislike Harry — he *hated* him.

Potions lessons took place down in one of the dungeons. It was colder here than up in the main castle, and would have been quite creepy enough without the pickled animals floating in glass jars all around the walls.

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



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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.

“Let’s try again. Potter, where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?”

Hermione stretched her hand as high into the air as it would go without her leaving her seat, but Harry didn’t have the faintest idea what a bezoar was. He tried not to look at Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle, who were shaking with laughter.

“I don’t know, sir.”



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“Thought you wouldn’t open a book before coming, eh, Potter?”

Harry forced himself to keep looking straight into those cold eyes. He *had* looked through his books at the Dursleys’, but did Snape expect him to remember everything in *One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi*?

Snape was still ignoring Hermione’s quivering hand.

“What is the difference, Potter, between monkshood and wolfsbane?”

At this, Hermione stood up, her hand stretching toward the dungeon ceiling.

“I don’t know,” said Harry quietly. “I think Hermione does, though, why don’t you try her?”

A few people laughed; Harry caught Seamus’s eye, and Seamus winked. Snape, however, was not pleased.

“Sit down,” he snapped at Hermione. “For your information, Potter, asphodel and wormwood make a sleeping potion so powerful it is known as the Draught of Living Death. A bezoar is a stone taken from the stomach of a goat and it will save you from most poisons. As for monkshood and wolfsbane, they are the same plant, which also goes by the name of aconite. Well? Why aren’t you all copying that down?”

There was a sudden rummaging for quills and parchment. Over the noise, Snape said, “And a point will be taken from Gryffindor House for your cheek, Potter.”

Things didn’t improve for the Gryffindors as the Potions lesson continued. Snape put them all into pairs and set them to mixing up a simple potion to cure boils. He swept around in his long black cloak, watching them weigh dried nettles and crush snake fangs,