

“Exactly, that’s what I said! I said you’d tell us if you did.” He sounded confident.

“Not if she’s someone he thought we wouldn’t approve of,” Hermione retorted. She turned to Harry, giving him a sympathetic look. “If you do, you can tell us. We won’t judge you, Harry.”

So many answers ran through Harry’s mind at that. *I’ve been hanging out with Slytherins. I like boys. I think I have a crush on Draco Malfoy.* He doubted they’d be so accepting then. Instead he shook his head stubbornly.

“I don’t have a secret girlfriend,” he promised.

“Mione, did you really think someone could date *Harry Potter* and keep it secret?” Ron pointed out, chuckling. “She’d be all over the school with the news.”

Harry grimaced. Girl or boy, he’d never date anyone who was excited by his fame like that. Surely they knew that? “If I ever get a girlfriend, you two will be the first to know,” he said, confident that would never happen. He was pretty sure that girls just... weren’t his thing. Regardless of the blond Slytherin who seemed to be taking up far too much space in Harry’s thoughts.

He ignored Ron and Hermione bickering about what sort of girl he might date, digging one of the muggle fiction books Remus had bought him out of his bag and settling in to read. It was hard to pay attention with so much going on inside his mind — when had his friendship with Ron and Hermione changed so much that he felt like they hardly knew him any more? And why was he still trying?

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Harry stormed out of Moody’s classroom as soon as the bell rang, walking too fast for anyone to catch up with him. His knees were aching from slamming into the desk multiple times, and his hands were shaking so hard he couldn’t get them to stop.

How the hell could Dumbledore *approve* of that? Putting underage kids under the Imperius curse! No matter whether it was good for them to know what it felt like, it was wildly illegal, and they definitely should have been sent some sort of consent form for their guardians to sign.

He was furious and in pain and his head still felt all funny from being Imperiused multiple times, and he didn’t even know where he was heading as long as it was *away*. Which is why he was utterly baffled when he found himself in the dungeons, outside Snape’s office. He bit his lip; Sirius and Remus did say that he could go to Snape if he was having problems during the school year. The man had actually been fairly decent to Harry in Potions class so far, all things considered.

Harry knocked cautiously.

“Enter,” came the curt response. Harry eased the door open, watching the Potions professor’s eyebrows rise. “Potter.”