

Sure enough, when Harry and the other teenagers were allowed down into the kitchen after the Order meeting, there was a tall, black-clad figure stood in the room.

It was worth it just to see the blood drain from Ron's face.

"Professor Snape is staying for dinner," Mrs Weasley declared, false cheer in her voice and confusion in her eyes. Harry couldn't really blame her; if he hadn't asked for it, it never would have happened. He wondered what sort of motive Snape had given for the odd behaviour.

"But—" Any protest Ron might've made died when dark eyes narrowed in his direction. Instead, a tiny squeak escaped him, and he hurried to sit as far away from Snape as possible.

Harry, more than willing to play his part, shot the Potions Master a moody glare. Amusement flashed in the man's eyes for the briefest moment.

Snape ended up sat between Remus and Kingsley; the two most tolerable Order members, as far as he was concerned. Though he played up his disgust at having to sit beside Remus.

Harry was amazed the werewolf could keep a straight face through it all. More than that, he was amazed that no one but him and Sirius seemed to realise that Snape's grumbled insults followed by Remus' too-mild witty retorts were the pair *flirting*.

Gross.

"So, Severus," Mr Weasley said cheerfully, passing a bowl of cabbage further down the table. "Are you ready for school to go back? Feeling like the castle is too quiet yet?"

"Ready to have my time invaded by imbeciles who can barely brew a Swelling Solution?" Snape drawled, sending a pointed look in the direction of the Gryffindor teens. "I think not."

Mr Weasley chuckled, as if it was supposed to be a joke. "Ah, but I'm sure there's a few talented kids in the mix who make it all worth it."

"We try our best, Dad," Fred chirped bravely, earning a Snape-glare of his own.

"Such a shame you've only got us for one more year, isn't it, Professor?" George added. The pair seemed bolstered by the fact that they — presumably — couldn't earn detention during the holidays. Though Harry noted they weren't *quite* bold enough to try any pranks at the dinner table. He'd seen George pocket some jelly-bean-like things the moment he'd seen Snape in the kitchen; no doubt the evening's entertainment rescheduled.

"On the contrary, Mr Weasley; I believe the entire school will rejoice if the two of you actually make it to graduation."

That just made the twins grin wider.

The possibility that they might *not* make it to graduation had Mrs Weasley pursing her lips. "You boys had better buckle down this year," she warned. "You only get one chance to take your NEWTs, after all — you'll never get a good Ministry job without them. I'm of half a