

Snape let out a quiet snort, though Harry could tell he was glad to have his book back, his long-fingered hands running fondly over the cover.

“Thank you,” he murmured, pocketing the book. “Now, the matter of your... *detention*.”

Harry grinned at the challenging smirk on the Slytherin’s face. It was time to get to work.

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Harry had almost forgotten about the meeting with Dumbledore he’d skipped, until the headmaster approached him at breakfast on Sunday morning with a disappointed frown.

“Harry, my boy,” he greeted, “I was expecting you in my office yesterday.”

“Oh, sorry, sir. I had detention with Professor Snape,” Harry returned blithely. Dumbledore’s frown deepened.

“I asked Severus to rearrange that detention.”

“Oh. Well no one told me anything, so I just went.” All around them, Harry’s friends were watching the exchange warily. Dumbledore’s lips pursed.

“I suppose I can forgive the miscommunication, my boy. I really must speak with you, though — perhaps this afternoon?”

“Surely I haven’t been back at classes long enough for you to have anything to talk to me about, Professor?” Harry played oblivious, trying not to smirk as the twinkle in those eyes disappeared.

“It’s not about your classwork, which I’m sure is quite fine. Well done on your OWLs, by the way; I was very surprised to see your results.”

Wasn’t that just the most back-handed compliment Harry had heard? His smile tightened.

“Sorry, sir, but my lawyer has advised me not to visit with you alone, after everything you’ve said in the *Prophet*. If you really need to speak to me, I’m sure Professor McGonagall would be happy to accompany me, as my head of house.” The woman in question was already on her way over, no doubt curious about what Dumbledore was up to. “Won’t you, Professor?”

Dumbledore straightened up, turning to offer a smile that didn’t quite reach genuine. “Now, Harry; Professor McGonagall is incredibly busy; there’s no need to add to her schedule just so the two of us can have a little chat.”

“Busy? Nonsense, Albus; I’m perfectly capable of rearranging things if there is a problem with one of my students. What did you need to discuss with Potter? Surely he isn’t in trouble already.” She eyed Harry suspiciously, and he gave his best innocent face in response.

“No, no trouble at all. I merely had some things I wished to discuss — truly, Minerva, your involvement is not necessary.”

“Mrs Frobisher has strongly recommended I not speak to you without another teacher present, sir,” Harry said, feigning apology. “She’s worried I might get misconstrued in the