

Chapter 7

That Saturday morning, Hermione kept shooting Harry suspicious looks across the table at breakfast. “I know what you’re planning,” she muttered. Harry grinned at her.

“It’ll be fine, Hermione. Trust me.” Maybe a little rule-breaking as a trio was just what Harry needed to stop feeling out-of-sorts. In the last few months, things had changed so much. Mostly for the better, but it was overwhelming at times. Some good old-fashioned mischief was just what the doctor ordered.

Harry pretended to see Ron and Hermione off at the Entrance Hall, then made his way towards the third floor, Marauder’s Map in his pocket. As he reached the statue of the one-eyed witch, he checked the map quickly, cursing under his breath at the small dot labelled ‘*Neville Longbottom*’ rapidly approaching.

“Hiya Harry!” Neville greeted cheerfully. “I forgot you weren’t going to Hogsmeade. Fancy a game of Exploding Snap?”

“Sorry, Neville,” Harry said, keeping his voice casual. “I’ve, uh, got some work to do.” He gave the other boy a pointed look, and Neville’s mouth made an ‘o’ of understanding.

“Did you want any help with it?” Neville asked quietly. Harry made to reply, but they were interrupted by sharp footsteps approaching. Neville gasped, shuffling behind Harry.

“Potter. Longbottom,” Snape greeted, staring Harry down with suspicion. “What are you two doing here? An odd place to meet.”

Harry refused to let his eyes drift to the one-eyed witch statue, even when Snape’s did. “We’re not meeting here. We just— met here.”

“Then I suggest the two of you return to Gryffindor tower, where you belong,” Snape drawled, running his hand over the statue. Harry held his breath.

“Right. We’ll, uh, do that, sir.” The two of them left, and Harry told Neville he was going to the library, only to double back as soon as he saw the dot labelled ‘*Severus Snape*’ securely in his office.

“Dissendium,” he whispered, tapping the witch’s hump and climbing in as soon as it opened. He was running late.

.-.

Hermione wasn’t with Ron when Harry found him. It was clearly too much to ask for the two of them to make up, even after Hagrid spoke to them. Harry was starting to regret going — all he was doing was following Ron around, letting the redhead show him all the things he’d seen when he’d visited by himself before Christmas, when Ron didn’t know about the map.