

“Ooh, perfect timing,” he murmured to himself, reading Dumbledore’s request to meet him that Saturday evening. Snape’s detention was proving even more useful already!

Hermione was just as furious with Harry’s presence in the Arithmancy classroom as she had been at Ancient Runes — more so, even, after Professor Vector gushed over his OWL result, playfully scolding him for keeping his talent hidden from her for so long.

Luckily, Daphne and Padma were also taking the class, so Harry had some friendly faces to sit with.

Harry was glad when his first free period arrived, he and Neville heading back to the common room. It was the time slot for Care of Magical Creatures, which Draco was taking because it would look good on his healer application, so the two Gryffindors went up to work on their homework for Snape together.

“Here goes any hopes that there would be less homework than last year,” Neville sighed, unrolling some parchment. Harry hummed in agreement.

“At least this year we’ve got free periods to work in.”

Indeed, knowing there were breaks within his schedule was a relief to Harry, even though he was sure they wouldn’t feel like breaks once the year fully got going.

At the very least, it would make meeting with the other heirs much easier to organise.

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After lunch, Neville was far too smug about returning to the common room with Parvati and Lavender while Harry headed down to the dungeons for Potions. Unsurprisingly, it was a fairly small group; a dozen of them in all. Ron didn’t look happy about being there, and his scowl deepened when Harry stood to wait with Draco, Blaise and Theo.

“Glad you can finally stop throwing shit in my cauldron, now?” he asked his boyfriend teasingly. Draco smirked.

“I don’t know, I might do it anyway. Keep you on your toes.”

Harry snorted, and Slughorn opened the door, happily welcoming them all in. To their surprise, there were already cauldrons bubbling away inside; four of them, each filled with something different. Harry sat with the three Slytherins, feeling bad for Pansy Parkinson as she was forced to sit with the three Ravenclaw boys — and feeling equally sorry for Padma and Ernie, who were left sharing a table with Ron and Hermione. Slughorn looked surprised by the arrangement, his gaze lingering on Harry for several seconds, a frown beneath his enormous moustache.

Did he think Harry’s *guiding hand* needed to direct him away from Slytherin House?

When Slughorn directed everyone to get their books and potion kits out, Ron stuck his hand up hesitantly, explaining his dilemma. Slughorn just smiled. “Not to worry, not to worry! You can use ingredients from the store cupboard today, I’ll get you set up. And we’ve got a few