

Granger how he feels, doesn't mean he needs to take it out on every girl who's so much as *looked* at a boy."

"Well, he'd better hope Hermione figures it out eventually, because I think you're right in saying he won't get a date otherwise," Harry muttered under his breath, looking further up the table, where Ron was sat alone. Even Dean and Seamus had distanced themselves, no doubt not wanting the Hogwarts girls to tar them with the same brush.

"Speaking of *dates*," Lavender purred, eyes lighting up. "Boyfriend?"

"Secret," he replied ruefully, and she gave an exaggerated pout.

"No fun."

Harry chuckled. "Sorry."

She left it at that, happily filling him in on the rest of the romantic gossip of Hogwarts. Harry could feel the eyes of the rest of the hall on him, and desperately wished they would all accept his secrets with as much grace as Lavender Brown.

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Considering Harry thought he may end up hexing Ron Weasley into the hospital wing if he went to Gryffindor Tower after dinner, he instead went down to the Chamber of Secrets, happily ensconcing himself in front of Salazar's bookshelves. He'd narrowed it down to eight books that mentioned the word 'horcrux', and was now trying to focus enough to read in further detail, his brain tripping up on the archaic form of English. Salazar was blessedly silent, except to offer translations into Parseltongue when Harry was truly stuck on a word.

The first three didn't contain much; they described the process to make horcruxes, though only one of them actually gave the explicit spells and rituals. The rest just said that 'certain magics' were involved during the cold-blooded murder of an innocent, and the soul was split and placed in a vessel. It was interesting to confirm that the soul was halved each time, making what remained progressively weaker with every additional horcrux.

Clearly, that had not been in any of the books Voldemort had read on the subject, given he'd made at least three of them.

It was the fourth book that had Harry's jaw dropping, his pulse picking up excitedly. Typically, it was one of the most confusingly-written ones, and eventually Harry gave up and just held the book up to Salazar, asking for a translation.

*"Should your horcrux be kept within a being of sentient life, there are dangers inherent to the natural lifespan of said host," the founder hissed. "It is recommended that horcruxes be held within inanimate objects, but where that is not preferred, it is possible to transfer the horcrux into a new living host, when the current host approaches their end. This must be done before the death of the host, as the death of one soul is the death of both."*