

free table — Viktor was almost always in the library these days, maybe Harry could sit with him?

He followed the trail of starry-eyed teen girls until he saw the crowd of Viktor's most devoted stalkers lurking around the edge of a bookshelf. They looked furious, muttering to each other and glaring daggers at something on the other side of the shelf. Harry kept out of sight and edged closer, his eyebrows rising at what was making the girls so upset.

Viktor was indeed in the library, but he wasn't studying alone. Hermione was sat right next to him, leaning just a little bit into his space as she read a passage from the book they appeared to be sharing, then said something quietly. Viktor's lips twitched, and he replied, making Hermione giggle. The pair of them looked pretty cozy; no wonder Viktor's fans were upset.

Harry backed out of the scene, feeling conflicted. On the one hand, he liked Viktor a lot, and if he liked Hermione, more power to him. He even liked Hermione, most of the time, even if she didn't like Harry very much these days. He wasn't really sure where their friendship stood — and he wouldn't be until he had proof that she was just friends with him because Dumbledore told her to be — but he still wanted her to be happy.

But on the other hand, if Hermione *was* working for Dumbledore, he didn't want her getting anywhere near Viktor and messing with the tentative friendship Harry had with the champions. If she was up to something, using Viktor for something... or he was just being paranoid and she happened to be enjoying getting attention from a popular older boy. Harry wondered how Ron felt about the whole thing. If he even knew about it.

Shaking his head and deciding it was none of his business, he went in search of somewhere else to study. The evening was apparently full of surprises, as he rounded a corner to see Blaise, Millicent Bulstrode, Mandy Brocklehurst, the Patil twins and Lavender Brown all sat together, working on what looked like their Potions essay due Monday. He tried to back out of that one, too, but Blaise caught sight of him before he did. "Potter," he greeted neutrally, the barest of smirks on his lips. "Care to join us?"

"I wouldn't want to intrude," he insisted, giving curious glances to Bulstrode, Brocklehurst and Lavender. They didn't seem to be having any issue with the intermingled Gryffindor/Slytherin/Ravenclaw group.

"You wouldn't be," Parvati insisted. "Have you done Snape's essay yet? We've only just started."

"Being brutally honest, Potter; your Potions grade could use all the help it can get," Bulstrode remarked, but she sounded more teasing than cruel. Harry paused for a minute. If they were genuinely inviting him, it would be rude to say no, surely? Bulstrode was known to avoid most of the real Slytherin drama, and if Blaise was encouraging it then she couldn't be too bad. Perhaps the Bulstrode heir could be swayed away from her Death Eater father.

"Well, you're not wrong there," he admitted, dropping into a chair opposite Mandy. Even after his lessons with Snape over the summer, he couldn't be seen to suddenly do well in the Slytherin's class, so Harry was still averaging a Poor.