

“It is an obscure branch of magic, used to defend one’s mind against external penetration,” Snape drawled. “You will have private instruction once a week, and should anyone else ask — even your little *friends* — you will tell them I am giving you Remedial Potions classes, to better your chance in scraping a passing OWL result.” He smirked cruelly. “No one who has seen your performance in my class will doubt that.”

That would have hurt, if Harry hadn’t known he was making straight Os in Potions, despite what the grade record said.

“Why do I have to learn this thing?” he asked, projecting a heavy amount of teenage sullenness.

“Because the headmaster believes it is a good idea,” Snape retorted. Harry clenched his jaw.

Dumbledore was worried about people getting into Harry’s head, was he? Well, that was a change of pace.

“Now listen here, Snape,” Sirius snarled. “Why do you have to be the one to teach him? Why can’t Dumbledore do it.”

“Because the headmaster has better things to do, Black, than try and get any form of complex instruction through Potter’s thick skull.”

Harry read between the lines; Dumbledore was too worried about encountering Voldemort, to go messing about in Harry’s brain. That worked in his favour — this way, Harry wouldn’t have to pretend not to know it.

The shouting match that brewed between Sirius and Snape grew loud enough that Harry was surprised they hadn’t drawn an audience. That was explained, however, when the door burst open and the entire Weasley family plus Hermione spilled in — Mr Weasley in the very centre, wearing striped pyjamas and a raincoat. “Cured!” he announced happily. “Completely cured. Oh, I say,” he added, taking in the scene in front of him. “Sorry to interrupt.”

Both Sirius and Snape lowered their wands, though they continued to snarl at each other.

“What’s going on here?” Mrs Weasley asked, frowning at the pair of them.

“*Snivellus* was just leaving,” Sirius growled. Snape’s eyes flashed.

“Something I’m sure you’re *dying* to do, Mutt,” he retorted. “Do us all a favour and give it a try.”

The crowd of redheads watched in alarm, and Harry wondered how he was the only one who seemed to see how much both of them were enjoying goading each other.

Truly, their teenage years must have been *awful*, if this is what they were like when they were supposed to be ‘tolerating each other’. How had Remus survived it?

Thankfully, the introduction of witnesses seemed to be enough for their little show. Snape pocketed his wand, sweeping towards the door. “Six o’clock, Monday evening, Potter,” he