

She sighed, but didn't say anything else, watching Neville tend to his plants. She knew it calmed him to work in the greenhouses, and it was oddly soothing for her just to watch; his repetitive motions, his sure and steady hand, the quiet murmurs of encouragement to the plants that he probably didn't realise she could hear. He was adorable, honestly.

Professor Sprout didn't mind her sitting back here with Neville, not now she'd proven quiet and trustworthy and unlikely to damage any of the more delicate specimens. The first few times, she'd had the Herbology Mistress' keen-eyed stare on her the entire time, worried that she and Neville might be using the quiet space to get up to something scandalous.

Not that it wasn't tempting, in the back of Ginny's mind. Since falling for Neville Longbottom she'd developed a disturbingly high number of greenhouse-related fantasies. But most of those worked just fine in his greenhouses at Longbottom Manor, where they weren't likely to be interrupted by a teacher or another student.

Ginny just wanted to hang out with Neville, really. Watch him enjoy his happy place. Especially when her own emotions were restless, her quick temper battling with her disappointment in a confusing muddle of moroseness. She just wanted to be able to take her exams and have the owl come with her results in July like normal, a little piece of paper she could show to her parents and her big brothers and have them be so *proud*.

She wanted *life* to go back to normal.

She felt bad for thinking it, sometimes. She wasn't that badly affected by things — her family were in the thick of it, but they were all still around. She wasn't like Harry, with such a huge burden on his shoulders. She would fight when the time came, but through her own choice, not because anyone expected it of her. Most of her family would probably prefer she *didn't*, in all honesty. And she didn't even have it as bad as the seventh years, who couldn't graduate until the whole mess was over, had to put their futures on hold in this already uncertain time.

She didn't have that much to sulk about, but she still felt it all the same. She had been able to pretend, up to this point; pretend she was a normal fifth year with a great boyfriend and a spot on the quidditch team and a solid friend group, the teenage life she'd dreamed of as a child when all her older siblings went off to Hogwarts and left her with Mum, coming back at holidays with stories about all their cool friends and cool classes and cool student life.

But OWLs being cancelled due to the Ministry being run by Death Eaters was not something that happened to normal fifth years.

Ginny shook her head slightly, ridding herself of the depressing thoughts. Her brown eyes went back to Neville, a smile tugging at her lips as he leaned over to trim some dead leaves off a tall plant with bright blue flowers. He was humming to himself, speaking softly to the plant, promising it would all be over soon and it would feel so much better when he was done.

When the plant looked perfect, the boy ran a hand through his dark blond hair, sitting back on his haunches and downing tools, lifting the hem of his t-shirt up to wipe the sweat off his face. Ginny's smile widened — he never would have done that, a year ago. Not in front of her, and probably not by himself. He'd been so self-conscious of his soft belly, it had taken a