

Then a twig snapped and Harry moved, whirling around and cancelling any secrecy or camouflage charms in the area with a handy little spell Sirius had taught him a while ago. It revealed six students — the Slytherin seventh year girl who had spoken out about taking exams at the Ministry, a seventh year Slytherin boy Harry vaguely recognised; Crabbe and Goyle; and to his complete astonishment, Lisa Turpin and Fay Dunbar. His housemate had a shaking hand as she pointed her wand in Harry's direction.

"Come quietly, Potter," the older Slytherin boy snarled. "Or it's going to hurt."

Harry snorted despite himself. "That's really the best threat you have?" he taunted. "I faced *Bellatrix Lestrange*, you think you idiots scare me?"

The Slytherin girl smirked, like that was exactly what she wanted him to say. "Wiping that cocky look off your face is going to be *very* satisfying. Crucio!" She pointed her wand, but to Harry it was barely more than being hit with the old handshake buzzer Dudley used to have. He grinned — that would be a huge red alert to Neville, Hannah and Luna.

He hadn't seen the new wards in action, really; which is why he was pleasantly surprised when the girl suddenly froze in place, wand outstretched. She stared at Harry. "What did you do?" Her companions were eyeing Harry warily, and he laughed.

"I didn't do anything. The Hogwarts wards, on the other hand, *really* don't like nasty spells being cast at students." Thank Merlin the wards were at full strength, now.

Crabbe and Goyle didn't get the memo; they both tried to hit Harry with simultaneous Stunners, which he deflected into the grass, and they too were frozen in place.

"What the fuck! We cast Stunners in class all the time," Dunbar exclaimed.

"Wards are about intent," Harry replied mockingly. "You're not trying to actually harm anyone in class. Also, I'm an heir."

The seventh year boy let out a snarl. "There are ways around it," he muttered, and then he threw himself bodily at Harry.

Harry might not have had to run from Dudley for a long while now, but he still had the reflexes of a boy who had spent a lot of time dodging someone much larger than himself. He ducked under his outstretched arms, and the boy took a lumbering step to the side to try and grab Harry. "Turpin, Dunbar, get him while he's distracted!" he growled. "I don't care about the ruddy wards — it only takes one of us to drag him to the ward line!" He tried to throw a punch, but he was far too slow.

Neither of the girls seemed entirely keen to risk firing at Harry and missing, losing their only shot. It was only when there was a shout from near the greenhouses that Harry jerked his head up, and Dunbar took her chance. But Harry wasn't that much of an idiot; he deflected the tangle of ropes that flew from her wand, sending them right back at her. Not that he needed it, really, as the wards did their work.