

“No you’re not,” Harry insisted. “Come on, just take a breath. You’re ace at Herbology — you know exactly what every one of these plants does, and how they interact with each other. Just think of it as an extension of that.” If he could get Neville to get over his fear of Snape, the other Gryffindor would probably do very well in the subject.

If only he could tell his friend that the Potions professor wasn’t as awful as he made out to be.

He kept on top of his potion the best he could while also quietly coaching Neville through his, going silent every time Snape was even remotely near their corner of the classroom. It didn’t stop the man from strolling by and making snide remarks every five minutes or so, but that didn’t bother Harry; he just had to remind himself that, unlike in the summer, he had to refrain from replying. He kept his head down, focusing on his Draught of Peace — which he’d brewed before under Snape’s instruction, at Seren Du — and by the end of the class, Harry and Hermione were the only two Gryffindors whose potions were emitting a delicate silver vapour. Neville’s was puffing out clouds of pale grey smoke, which seemed a much better outcome than either of them anticipated. Certainly better than Ron’s, which was spitting green sparks.

“What is this, Potter?” Snape drawled, giving the cauldron a look of disgust. Harry fought down a smirk.

“Draught of Peace, sir.” He tried not to sound too confident, but he knew damn well there was nothing Snape could properly criticise about it. Snape knew, too, if the blink-and-you’ll-miss-it flash of approval in his eyes was anything to go by.

“We’ll see about that, won’t we?” came the cool response, before Snape gave one last disparaging glance at Neville’s cauldron and continued back up to the front of the classroom, barking out orders to bring a flagon of potion up for grading. Harry allowed himself a small smile as he bottled his draught.

Snape could belittle him and his father and his skills as much as he wanted during class, Harry knew it was all for show. And even if he found a way to give Harry a failing grade for every single piece of classwork, it would have no bearing on his exam grade.

Harry was going to get that O in Potions if it killed him.

.-.-. .

Giving Ron and Hermione a wide berth at lunch — Ron was complaining about Potions, while Hermione was furiously marking up her class schedule and comparing it to her revision timetable — Harry and Neville went to sit at the Hufflepuff table instead, with Hannah and Ernie.

Harry’s first instinct had been the Ravenclaw table, but then he’d realised that beside Luna, Ginny was sat flirting up a storm with Michael Corner. He wasn’t going to subject Neville to that.