

“You good to go?” she asked, wondering if he had any other projects to tend to. He nodded, squeezing her hand.

“All set, yeah. Thanks for coming with me — it’s nice to have company, even if you’re just sitting there.” Some of his plants he didn’t mind her helping with, but most were too fragile for her heavy-handed enthusiasm.

“It’s way too sunny to be up in the castle,” she returned, tilting her head up to feel the sunlight warm her face through the glass roof. She closed her eyes a moment, and when she opened them again the look in Neville’s eyes made her breath catch in her throat.

“You’re so pretty,” he murmured, reaching out to tangle a hand in her hair, watching the way the light shimmered off the copper-coloured strands.

“And you’re far too handsome for your own good,” she said, watching his nose screw up in denial. “Did I tell you I overheard Leanne Moon and Mandy Brocklehurst talking about you in the girls’ bathroom the other day? Mandy was considering starting some rumour about catching me with Michael in the Ravenclaw dorms so that you’d break up with me and go out with her instead.”

“That can’t be true,” Neville denied, shaking his head. Ginny nodded, grin widening. “Seriously? But— she thought I’d just *believe* that?”

“She was going to make it very convincing,” came Ginny’s airy response. “Get Michael in on it and everything. I think she’s got some kind of blackmail on him, she was pretty sure he’d be up for it.”

“Blimey.” Neville blinked, shaking his head once more. “That— Mandy Brocklehurst? Really?”

“You reconsidering your options?” Ginny teased; Mandy was cute, after all. Neville scoffed.

“Don’t be daft,” he said, not a second of hesitation. “I just... Mandy went out with *Roger Malone*, what’s she looking at me for?”

“Malone has weird hair,” Ginny said, grimacing; whoever had told the Ravenclaw boy that curtains suited him was committing a crime against humanity. “And she’s looking at you because you’re hot. Speaking of,” she added, feeling sweat trickle down her back beneath her top. “Fancy going for a dip in the lake before dinner?”

Neville arched his brows, hands settling on her hips. “Are you just trying to get me wet and half naked?” he asked with a sigh. Ginny beamed.

“Yup,” she chirped. “What do you think?” She tried not to look too eager, wondering if being shirtless where anyone could see them was too far out of his comfort zone.

“Go on, then,” he relented, kissing her forehead and directing her towards the greenhouse doors, hand moving to the small of her back. “I swear, I’ve got no willpower when it comes to you.” He didn’t sound mad about it, more resigned to his fate. Ginny wound an arm around