

With one last kiss, they agreed to part ways, Harry going first to avoid suspicion. He glanced around the rose bush, then stepped out from behind it, intending to get back on the path and head inside. Instead, he walked straight into Professor Snape. "Potter," Snape drawled, his eyes flicking from Harry to the rose bush and back again. His face turned exasperated, and he pinched the bridge of his nose. "For Merlin's sake, learn some discretion."

Harry grinned, turning to walk away. "And ten points from Gryffindor!" Snape called after him. He heard the man muttering as he walked in the opposite direction, blasting a rose bush with a spell to reveal a pair of Ravenclaw sixth years in a passionate embrace. "Twenty points from Ravenclaw!"

Harry chuckled quietly; at least Snape was having fun.

He heard raised voices when he reached the Entrance Hall, and grimaced when he got close enough to recognise them.

"You're fraternising with the enemy!"

"The *enemy*? You're the one who's got a bloody figurine of him in your bedroom!"

"He's just using you to get closer to Harry!"

"He's better friends with Harry than he is with me!"

Ron and Hermione were stood at the bottom of the stairs, Hermione's eyes red with tears. Ron was glaring at her. "You can't trust him, Hermione. He's from Durmstrang."

"*Ugh!*" Hermione's noise of frustration echoed through the hall. "If you don't like it, you know what the solution is!"

"Oh yeah, what's that?"

"Next time there's a ball, ask me before someone else does, and not as a last resort!" Hermione whipped around, startling at the sight of Harry. "Harry. Where have you been?"

"Needed some air. You coming back in?" He jerked his head back towards the Great Hall, and Hermione glanced at Ron for a moment, then nodded decisively.

"Let's go." She ignored Ron as she looped an arm through Harry's, heading back into the hall.

"Ignore him," Harry murmured. "He's a jealous git who doesn't deserve you. Go back to Viktor." The Durmstrang champion was dancing with Fleur and Cho, and looked delighted to see Hermione had returned, then immediately concerned when he noticed her crying. Hermione sniffed, carefully wiping at her eyes without smearing her make-up.

"Thanks, Harry." She strode over to Viktor, waving his concerns off and dragging him back to dance.