

“Maybe you’ll actually get some packing done while I’m gone,” Draco joked.

“Sorry, Harry’s needed too. Grunt work in the potions lab,” Charlie informed him. It was Harry’s turn to sigh dramatically.

“Wonderful.” Remus was moving into Snape’s quarters at Hogwarts, but Snape didn’t want to leave potions ingredients at Seren Du for an unspecified amount of time, so everything had to be moved from his lab here to the school. And unfortunately, due to the sensitive nature of the ingredients, that all had to be done by hand.

They worked in companionable silence, Snape occasionally giving Harry instructions on things, but for the most part the almost-seventh year knew what to do with each ingredient. Harry was still getting used to seeing Snape in short sleeves; something the man did often, now that there was no brand on his arm.

“Now that you are no longer in need of training,” Snape began, startling Harry, “that means you are also no longer in need of repeated detentions under my care.” He levelled a stern look at Harry; the kind of look that had students crying into their cauldrons, but only left Harry mildly amused. “If you do get a detention, it will be because you have earned it, and the punishment will reflect that.”

“No more mouthing off in class, then,” Harry surmised, smirking as he put a box of shrivelfigs in the trunk. “Yes, sir.”

Snape snorted, muttering something that sounded an awful lot like ‘I’ll believe that when I see it’.

“I also expect you to put the appropriate amount of effort into my class. Horace did nothing but sing your praises last year, and I expect you to put in that same level of dedication.”

Harry realised what the man was getting at, and looked up at him knowingly. “No more masks,” he promised. “For either of us. You’re the same cranky bastard, and I’m the same insufferable Gryffindor, but... none of the rest.” No pretending he was worse at subjects than he was. No acting like he couldn’t stand to be in Snape’s presence. No lying to his friends about his time spent with the man. And no more of Snape pretending he hated everything about Harry James Potter.

“None of the rest,” Snape agreed quietly. He strode over to Harry, under the pretence of checking on the powdered erumpent horn, but put a hand on the Gryffindor’s shoulder. “I am proud of you, you know,” he murmured, so soft Harry almost didn’t hear it. His breath caught, heart stuttering at the words. He’d heard them a hundred times since the battle, from all kinds of people, but... never from Snape.

“I... d’you think Mum would be?” he asked, biting his lip, watching the man’s expression. Snape’s gaze cast over Harry in that way that made him feel so very exposed.

“Lily would be bragging about her son from here to the moon, were she alive,” he said, smiling ever so slightly. “Not because of your achievements, though she’d be proud of those too. But because of the man you have become.”