

Neville looked down at the empty plate in front of him, then guiltily met his girlfriend's brown eyes. "I can't stomach anything, Gin."

She huffed, and in a few moments there were two sandwiches in front of her — she nudged one towards Draco, then practically forced the second into Neville's hands. "Eat," she repeated firmly. "Starving yourself won't help Harry any."

She was right, and they both knew it. The sandwich tasted like cardboard, but Neville ate it anyway, his mind firmly elsewhere.

He hated this part of being Harry Potter's friend. The waiting. At least last year, when shit went down, he'd been able to go along, able to help and be useful and stand at Harry's side. This was like the third Triwizard task all over again — staring at a maze, worry bubbling in his gut, knowing Harry was in danger but not able to do anything about it.

Neville finished his sandwich, and was just about to ask Draco if he'd heard anything else, when all of a sudden the tension in the hall seemed to rise abruptly. He looked up, and saw red.

Dumbledore had just entered the hall, looking entirely unbothered, that damned genial smile on his face like there was nothing wrong at all. He strolled between the house tables as if it were any other day — as if he hadn't just kidnapped Neville's best friend.

Before he knew it, he was on his feet and stalking towards the headmaster. "Where is he?" he demanded, drawing his wand on the man. Dumbledore paused, brows rising — like Neville was a mild surprise, and not a legitimate threat.

He didn't know what Neville could do. He didn't know what Harry had taught him.

"Mr Longbottom, I'm quite sure I have no idea what you mean," Dumbledore began, but Neville wasn't cowed.

"Harry," he spat. "What have you done to him? I know you took him!" Everyone was staring at them. A vein in Dumbledore's temple twitched.

"You're mistaken, Mr Longbottom — perhaps Mr Potter has merely left of his own accord? His behaviour has been rather... erratic, this year. It is entirely likely he has decided the castle is no longer where he wishes to be." He frowned sadly. "I know how upset you must be by his betrayal, Mr Longbottom, and I would be happy to offer you a friendly ear. Or perhaps Madam Pomfrey; she understands how difficult grief can be to process."

Neville growled, and it was only the headmaster's quick reflexes that prevented his silent Stunning charm from hitting. "Really, now!" Dumbledore scolded, frowning at him. "Attacking your teachers, no matter how upset you are, is not acceptable in this school! Ten points from Gryffindor, Mr Longbottom, and detention with Professor McGonagall tonight."

"I don't care about detentions!" Neville shouted. "I just want to know where you've taken Harry! I know it was you — you've wanted him out of the way ever since he broke out of your compulsions!"