

Sweat poured from his brow as his chest and arms burned deep in the muscle. Harry arrived at the Headmaster's office promptly at 6AM as instructed, and the eminent wizard wasted no time in beginning this new training.

He wasn't performing any particularly difficult piece of magic, just a Levitation Charm, but he'd been holding it continuously for almost an hour. The sphere in the air appeared as though it were in suspended animation, entirely unmoving. That hadn't been the case when he started, there was a massive dent in the ceiling that could attest to that fact.

Excruciating, that was the only way that Harry could think to describe it. *Who knew that a Levitation could be so bloody fucking difficult.* It was as if he'd done hundreds of push ups in a row, each repetition as slow as possible. Despite the pain, Harry was happy for the training because he could feel his magic coursing through his veins. And he knew, without a shadow of a doubt, it was under his control.

Dumbledore emerged from his pensieve, a deep frown on his face. This seemed as good a time as any to view the memory of the previous day's events. *It would be quite the bore to sit here watching me hold a sphere aloft all morning.*

"Thank you for providing the memory," Dumbledore went and sat behind his desk, "I will speak with your friends just to confirm the veracity of events and deal with Mr. Malfoy accordingly." He looked at the sphere, still hanging there just as it had been when he left the room, "Very good, Harry. I think that should be enough for now."

Forcing himself not to simply drop the spell, he slowly lowered the sphere to the desk. When it finally thudded to the desktop, he heaved great breaths of air. His lungs burned as he wiped the sweat from his brow. Dumbledore looked pleased with what he'd accomplished, "How do you feel?"

"Tired, sore, and very happy to be done with it." Harry said honestly.

Dumbledore chuckled, "You should be satisfied as well. Very few witches or wizards could sustain a single spell for so long, and even fewer could manage it with such unwavering control." He looked over his half-moon spectacles, "Though I am more curious about what you feel with regards to your magic?"

"I'm... acutely aware of it, in a way I can't ever remember being before."

"Wonderful, absolutely wonderful. I want you to do everything in your power to maintain that awareness. More than anything, that will help you learn the control that we're seeking to achieve. We will meet again in two days, at this same time." He steepled his fingers in front of him, looking contemplative, "I hope you intend to participate in the coming Tournament."

"Yes, sir."

"Good. With that in mind, we will focus on your ability to control the potency of your combat spells from our next lesson going forward."

"Brilliant," Harry had no desire to hurt his peers. *Except for maybe Malfoy and even that's only when he's being a real asshole.*

"But a controlled classroom is far different from a duel, as I'm sure you know." Harry nodded and Dumbledore went over to his bookshelf and removed a small, leather-bound book, "It would be best if

you begin developing some skill in the mind-arts, it can be quite beneficial particularly in the heat of battle. We can't have you hurting our foreign guest when they arrive because you lose control during a duel." *On the Intricacies of the Mind*. There was no author listed.

He'd heard Occlumency and Legillimency mentioned in passing by the Headmaster, but it was widely regarded as an incredibly difficult branch of magic. The latter was practiced almost exclusively by Mind Healers to his knowledge. It could take years to perfect, and few had the patience for anything more than the rudimentary usage of Occlumency.

Dumbledore was looking at the clock, "You should return to your dorm and prepare for the day, my boy. Well done this morning."

"Thank you, Professor." Harry took the dismissal. He got back to Gryffindor Tower and said a quick greeting to Katie and Alicia who were waiting for Angelina to go down to breakfast. They both looked surprised to see coming in so early.

In his dorm the others were only just starting to rise for the day. He got a few odd looks at his exhausted appearance, but he didn't pay them any mind. *At this point, you'd think they'd just be used to the weird things that seem to happen around me. This is quite tame compared to everything else I've done. I mean there's not even any blood.*

The almost scalding hot water of the shower did a great deal to sooth his weary body, and he spent normal than longer in getting clean. By the time he'd toweled off, he felt nearly good as new, if still a bit sore. He came down to the Common Room feeling refreshed and found Hermione waiting for him. Predictably, he found her with a book in hand, "Morning."

"Harry!" She hadn't sensed him approaching, "What's this I hear that you were out and about before anybody else this morning?" Harry didn't have the same tendency as Ron to oversleep but he wasn't normally an early riser either.

He'd grown accustomed to Hermione's seemingly insatiable curiosity a long time ago. She could get a bit pushy with it at times, but he knew that she usually meant well, "I had a meeting with Dumbledore."

"Oh, why?" It wasn't commonplace, even for Harry, to have a meeting with the Headmaster. *Though I have been in his office more than any student in history I'd wager.*

"There's something I need help with, and Professor Dumbledore is the only person with the experience to help me." He hoped that was enough to satisfy his bushy-haired friend. *I don't want to say much more for now. It would mean explaining the Horcrux and that's not a conversation to be had in the middle of the Common Room.*

Hermione pursed her lips, unhappy with his evasion but let the matter go, "Right, let's get down. I want to get our schedules." A year ago, they would have waited for Ron, but they knew he'd come down with Parvati when he was ready.

"Happy you're going to have a normal course load this year?" Harry asked as they exited the portrait of the Fat Lady.

Hermione flushed a bit in embarrassment, "Yes...."

"I told you Divination was an absolute waste for anyone who didn't already have the gift. Especially for someone as... analytical as you."

She huffed, "Yes, and I know there's nothing Professor Burbage is teaching that I don't already know from living there for fifteen years so..."

"Muggle Studies was a massive waste of your time, too." Harry supplied for her, earning a slap on the shoulder. Funnily enough, it was because Harry chose not to take Divination and Hermione had eventually dropped it that Ron got together with Parvati. Without either of his two closest friends in the class, he worked with Lavender and Parvati. Harry still wasn't entirely sure how his ginger friend managed to pull the Indian girl. *He definitely got lucky that the feelings were mutual.*

They arrived at the Great Hall, and it was already filling up with students. All the Professors, Dumbledore included, sat at the head table eating their own breakfast.

Looking around the room, Harry had a thought. *This year is supposed to be about creating new connections, right?* He looked at Hermione, "I think I'm going to go and sit with the 'puffs."

She frowned at him, "Is that even allowed?" It was amazing in retrospect that they'd spent three full years in the castle and never once thought to sit at another house's table.

"I guess I'll find out." He shrugged and she rolled her eyes at his nonchalance, "Merlin knows that Snape will let me know **immediately** if I've broken a rule. You're more than welcome to come with me, or maybe go sit with the 'claws."

Hermione looked skeptical but took the advice. As he walked along the Hufflepuff table, she made her way over to the Ravenclaw table and sat with Padma and Mandy Brocklehurst. Harry knew exactly where he was going as well, "Morning, Susan."

The redhead almost jumped as she looked up to look at him, she'd been in quiet conversation with her best friend, Hannah Abbott, "Morning!" Susan almost yelled, making her blush. She covered her mouth with her hand and took a breath before continuing at a level tone, "Good to see you, Harry. Heard you had an interesting train ride."

All the 'puffs around him stared as he swung one leg over the bench and sat across from Susan. *I've killed a Basilisk and fought off Dementors but this gets them staring like I've grown a second head.*

"I couldn't help being me and managed to find a bit of trouble. After that I just wanted a bit of quiet."

"From what I heard trouble found you in the form of Malfoy." The blonde-haired git was sitting with only Crabbe and Goyle for company over at the Slytherin table. Even Pansy appeared to have abandoned him as she sat with Theodore Nott further down.

"At this point in my life, it all just seems like the same thing." It was true, he just assumed he was a trouble magnet both ways at this point. He seemed to love it, and it loved him, "Did you get to the last Wizengamot session? It was mad from everything I've heard."

She pulled her braided hair over her shoulder, "Yes, it was... interesting to say the least. Fudge tried everything he could think of to keep his position but, it wasn't even close in the end. Then there were all the nominations for the next Minister."

“Is it true your aunt really doesn’t want it?”

“She’s conflicted. Auntie knows she **could** do a good job if she wins but she’s not sure if it’s something she really wants. I’ve met Scrimgeour, he can be a bit difficult, but he’s built for politics in a way she isn’t.” Susan explained.

“Well, either should be an improvement on Fudge,” Susan nodded her agreement. He chewed on a piece of bacon and changed the subject, “So excited for the Tournament?”

“Definitely,” A wide smile blossomed on her face, “should be great fun.” Most of the hall was still talking about the announcement last night.

“Please tell me you’re going to go out for the fourth-year dueling team.” They’d been in the Dueling Club together their last two years and he doubted there was any Hufflepuff in their year better than her.

“Absolutely.” Susan didn’t see herself as anything special as a duelist, though she did have an impressive repertoire of spells for her age thanks to her aunt. She was competent and could beat all but maybe Ernie among the fourth year Hufflepuffs. *I just need to be one of the top two. And there’s no doubt Harry will be one of the Gryffs so, it’ll make it much easier to spend a bit more time with him.*

Her interest in dueling was usually because she wanted to be capable of protecting herself, while her real passion was Healing Magic. This year there was an added incentive.

“Brilliant.” Harry gave her a wide smile, “What about you, Hannah?”

The blonde-haired girl had been watching their interactions with interest and shook herself at being addressed, “I was thinking of going out for the academic team.” He felt a shadow looming over him and looked up to see Snape by his side. *The greasy bat couldn’t help himself.*

“Potter,” He spit out the name with all his usual venom, “why is it that you always think yourself above the rules? Return to your own table before you find yourself in detention.”

“Professor, this year is supposed to be about forming new relationships both across houses and internationally,” Snape sneered at that, “I simply wanted to sit with some of my potential future teammates.”

His beady black eyes held nothing but disdain, “Mediocrity won’t be allowed to represent this prestigious school.” Harry had a hard time believing the man could be so ridiculously obstinate. Harry had his faults, but he wasn’t mediocre. *I wonder what’s made him hate me even more. Is it that I got Malfoy thrown into Azkaban or that Sirius is free?* He expected this to be their most contentious year since his first as a result.

Harry could feel the rest of the hall watching them. Even Dumbledore was watching the exchange and he’d clearly seen enough as he made to rise. He was stopped by both McGonagall and Sprout. The two other professors hurried toward them, “Severus,” Sprout started, “there is nothing in the rules about students being required to sit at their house table except for the opening, closing and Halloween feasts. And Hufflepuff is more than happy to have, Mr. Potter.”

“Of course, you are,” Snape was unable to hide his distaste for the House of the Badger. Sprout shot a nasty glare in his direction at the insinuation, as did every Hufflepuff within earshot. Realizing his

mistake, he shot one last glare in Harry's direction before he removed himself from the situation. Without another word he stalked away, robes billowing behind. *He must use a spell for that.*

Sprout handed each of her badgers their schedules, "Don't mind him ladies, at least outside of class. Severus is terribly bitter and wants to make everyone just as miserable as him." Susan and Hannah both struggled to hide their snickers.

McGonagall handed Harry his schedule as well, "In future, please sit at our table until you get your schedule. It does make things easier," she gave him a wry smile, "though I wasn't going to give Severus that satisfaction." The two Hufflepuffs looked at their Transfiguration Professor shocked, but Harry wasn't. Given how difficult Snape could be, McGonagall had no problem giving it back in kind.

"Charms first thing." Susan told him once the professors left, "How bout you, Harry?"

"Potions, because the gods are cruel." He informed them, somber and dramatic. Both girls only giggled at his antics, "Thanks for the sympathy, I see how it is."

Susan reached across and patted his hand sympathetically, "I'm sure you'll get past these trying times."

He chuckled at her tone, "I appreciate your support." He read over the rest of the schedule, "At least I have DADA after. Moody should be an interesting teacher if nothing else."

"He was one of my auntie's mentors. She never has anything but good things to say about him... well mostly."

There were only about ten minutes until the first classes of the day were going to start, "It's a long walk down to the dungeons, I'll see you girls later." Both girls offered him a wave farewell. Once he was out of the hall, Hannah immediately leaned close to her best friend and started talking quietly with her best friend.

He met up with his fellow Gryffindors and they headed down to the chilly dungeons together. They were quickly joined by the Slytherins. Harry couldn't help but notice the outright hostility he'd received from Malfoy the previous day was gone replaced by an obvious desire to ignore his very existence.

Harry couldn't help but wheedle at him just a bit, especially after hearing just how dictatorial the blonde ponce had been in keeping the Slytherins to themselves, "Morning Blaise, Tracey."

The rest of the Gryffindors looked surprised by his casual greeting. He resisted the urge to roll his eyes at their ridiculousness. *It's not as though most of them haven't had to work with Slytherins in the past, too. Surely, they've noticed that they're not all bad.*

"Morning Harry," Tracey returned with a smile while Blaise just nodded his head in greeting. Draco's nostril flared angrily as he leaned against the stone wall of the dungeon corridor, but he managed not to give any further reaction.

"Where's your third?" Daphne was noticeably absent from their usual group.

Tracey snorted out a laugh, "She needed fifteen more minutes of beauty sleep this morning. Got down to breakfast late because of it. And Merlin forbid you rush her eating."

“And given Snape’s foul mood yesterday and this morning, neither Tracey or I had any interest getting here late.” Blaise added.

Daphne rounded the corner at that moment. As she approached, her eyes flicked briefly to Harry. She swallowed before looking exasperatedly at her friends. She’d obviously heard the end of their conversation, “I told you we’d be fine to wait a few more minutes.”

“We weren’t willing to take the risk.” In all fairness to them, Daphne only barely beat Snape to the classroom. Not ten seconds later, he stomped down the corridor and banged the door open, “In. And don’t take your seats.”

They all exchanged looks but listened without question. As they all filed in one by one, they waited toward the back of the classroom as Snape made his way to the front. He looked like he’d swallowed a particularly sour lemon as he examined them, “The Headmaster has insisted, in the name of school cooperation for the coming Tournament, that students from each house be paired together where possible... including potion-making.”

Ron groaned but made no further noise when Snape’s attention snapped to him, “Longbottom and Zabini.” Snape started listing the new partners and people silently filled their seats starting from the back. Harry felt sympathetic for Ron when he ended up with Malfoy, but he was happy it wasn’t him. *Suppose it could be worse though, you could end up paired with Crabbe or Goyle. At least Malfoy is a good brewer.*

It seemed even Snape wasn’t so cruel as to make someone suffer the two buffoons as a partner. There were thirteen Slytherin’s against eleven Gryffindors and so they were paired together. Harry didn’t hear his name until the professor was at the front of the room, “Granger and Davis. Potter and Greengrass.”

Harry stepped across Snape and received a sneer for his troubles. Daphne sat beside him and he couldn’t help but think she looked a bit stiff, almost nervous. He leaned in and whispered so that only she could hear, “Don’t worry, I’m not half bad at this... no matter what Snape would like everybody to believe.” She gave him a small smile in return and seemed to relax at least a bit.

“You’ll be making the Calming Draught. I need only one potion from each pair. The directions are on the board.” With that Snape turned, cloak billowing behind him. *Is that really necessary every time?*

Daphne grabbed her cauldron and immediately put it onto the fire, “Please go grab the ingredients, Harry.” He wasn’t going to argue. He said he wasn’t half-bad at potions, and it was true, but he knew he wasn’t the best.

He returned from the ingredients cabinet to find Daphne reading her textbook instead of looking at Snape’s directions. There were small notes in the margins, “Do you not just follow what’s on the board?”

She continued reading but shook her head, “Professor Snape is an incredibly gifted potioneer. So what’s obvious to him in his instructions, isn’t usually so obvious to others. I like to check the book just to double check there’s nothing he’s left out because of it.”

Harry was looking at her blankly, “Is that why I always seem to be relegated to Exceeds Expectations and Acceptable no matter what I do?”

Looking up at him, she breathed out a laugh at the look on his face, "Sorry to say, but yes. That's probably the reason." Harry's head fell to the desk with a thump. *Of fucking course.*

"Potter, you don't have enough sense in your head to be knocking what little remains to you out." Snape jibed at him from the front of the room, "Now, pay attention to your potion. You will not skate by on Miss Greengrass's exceptional skill."

Daphne patted his shoulder comfortingly, but he could see she was trying to hide her amusement, "Go ahead, laugh it up."

As he sat back up, Daphne pushed a bundle of belladonna toward him, "Roughly chop those, please."

Falling to her direction, he watched as she added the alcoholic base. *I suppose that alone would be calming enough for some people.* "So, what about the little notes in your book?"

"My parents own an apothecary in Winchester," She sounded very fond of it, "I've been helping them since I was eleven. You pick up a thing or two when you're around it like that."

"Does your family live near there?"

"We're in South Hampton near the coast. It's not far"

They fell into a comfortable silence as they made steady progress on their potion. Harry's tasks were generally quite simple. Just prepare the ingredients as she gave them to him. They were about halfway done when he had a thought, "Say... you wouldn't be willing to share some of those potions tips with me, would you?"

"You're going to get the benefit of them so long as we're partners," she gave a wry smile at his pout, "But I'll think about. There might be something you can do for me. We'll see."

A few minutes later, Daphne grabbed his hand as he was dicing the crocodile hearts into small chunk, he didn't notice the slight blush it brought to her cheeks, "That's enough. Too small and it will dissolve into the potion too quickly and cause..." She was interrupted by a loud scream from behind them as Crabbe and Goyle's potion melted their cauldron, "well... that."

Had it been any Gryffindor that was responsible, Harry was sure Snape would have been hurling all sorts of abuse at them. As it was, he just glared at them as he vanished the scalding, useless potion, "Out." The command sent them stumbling out the door.

Toward the end of the brew, Daphne added a very carefully measured amount of peppermint oil, "Too much and it can cause a burning throat, watery eyes, and even uncontrollable sobbing. So, you can't just turn the cordial over into the potion."

As always, potion making was a meticulous process. Draco and Ron finished before them though their result looked less than perfect. They both wanted to just get it done and get away from each other. Lavender and Pansy finished next and Harry shuddered to think what would happen if the two actually became friends. *Two of the biggest gossips in the sodding school. No thank you.*

Daphne and Harry's potion finished precisely when it was meant to, around about the time half the class had already finished and left. But when they were done, their potion was the appropriate sky blue.

Harry ladled a sample of their potion into their glass vial, "I'll take it up. Snape gets frustrated just looking at you, and I'd rather not get graded down because of it." *That's fair, I suppose.*

Daphne went and placed their efforts on Snape's desk, he glanced at it only briefly, "Miss Greengrass, exemplary as always. Ten points to Slytherin. Please store the rest of your potion. It is of good enough quality to be used in the infirmary."

Doing as he asked, Harry helped her pack everything away. As they were leaving the classroom Tracey and Hermione were just finishing theirs as well. It seemed to him that Hermione was expecting to have the same request made of her as Daphne, but it never came.

Harry opened the door for Daphne, free of the aromas of the potions, he caught the scent of her lilac perfume, "I hope I was an acceptable potions partner."

Stopping, she appraised him with bright blue eyes before nodding seriously, "Yep, I think I'll keep you." This time he definitely noticed the blush that came to her cheeks as she hadn't meant that to come out, "I..."

He pretended not to notice her discomfort, "Perfect, considering we're stuck with each other either way."

"True," He was impressed with how quickly she recomposed herself, "You're certainly better than some of the others I could've gotten."

"I'd say the Gryffindors were in greater danger than you Slytherins. Even Neville on a bad day is better than Crabbe or Goyle." She didn't even think to deny it. They reached the spot where the corridor split. One way led to the stairs up, the other deeper into the dungeons and Slytherin common rooms.

"What've you got next?"

"Transfiguration, but I'm dropping my potions kit back in the dorm first," Daphne told him, "You?"

"DADA."

"Damn, quite the climb. Good thing we finished a bit early."

Harry laughed, "I probably would have finished even earlier without you, but my potion wouldn't have been nearly so good."

"True." She told him without a hint of modesty.

He appreciated that she knew just how good she was, "I'll see you later, Daphne." She gave him a little nod as they parted ways.

"Harry! Wait up." Tracey and Hermione were making their way down the hall as he made for the stairs. His bushy haired friend fell into step beside him. As they climbed the stairs, she commented "Bit weird working on a potion with a Slytherin, huh?"

"I guess. It was definitely different than working with Ron." They'd been partners for three years and now he was questioning how much better he could have done if he switched up on occasion, "Did yours go well?"

“Yes,” though she didn’t sound entirely pleased with it. “Tracey’s pretty good as long as you keep her on task.” He could see she wanted to say more, and needed to wait just a few seconds for it to come, “I still can’t believe Snape didn’t want ours for the infirmary as well!”

“Well, ours was perfect. And considering I don’t think I’m any better than Tracey. You just need to accept that Daphne might just be better than you.” Harry teased, although it was true.

Hermione huffed, “Don’t even start. She’s beaten me three different terms for best in potions. And I can’t even claim it’s favoritism because she actually *is* that good.” Harry honestly didn’t know that.

“Well, I imagine it would get boring if you were the best at it without any competition.” Granted, Hermione’s pursuit of excellence was always enough regardless of any extra incentive, but a little extra motivation never hurt anybody.

They made their way up to the Defense classroom to find most of the Ravenclaws already waiting. Ron was with Parvati who was speaking with her sister, “So how was Malfoy?”

“A right git who’s at least good at potions.” Ron scowled, “I’ll be surprised if we don’t deck each other before the end of term.”

“At least you got someone who’s good at potions,” Parvati said morosely, “I got stuck with Millicent. She’s quiet, and not too miserable to be around, but she’s about as delicate as a rampaging hippogriff.”

“How about you, Padma? What was your first lesson?” Harry asked.

“Oh... uh,” with the arrival of the other Gryffindors, she’d expected to be left out of the conversation, “Herbology. I had to listen to Zacharias Smith bluster all morning.”

The Hufflepuff was nearly as pompous as Malfoy and most people found it hard to understand how he’d ended up in the house he did, “What did you do to piss Sprout off to end up with that git?”

Padma looked affronted, “Absolutely nothing! It was randomly assigned!”

Harry patted her shoulder, “Keep telling yourself that.” He received a surprisingly powerful poke to his side from the witch for his cheek, “Alright, alright, I give. You’re always lovely. I’m sure it was all just by chance.” He gave her a wink, “Good thing is Sprout switches up partners all the time. It won’t last.”

“Thank Merlin,” Padma said with a laugh.

The door of the classroom opened to reveal the grizzled visage of Professor Moody on the other side, “In with you. I’m not doing any teaching out in the hall.”

No one was dumb enough to argue with Moody, so they all filled the seats quickly. He limped his way to the front of the classroom, blue eye whizzing around in his head, “Welcome to Defense Against the Dark Arts, year four.”

When he reached the front of the room, he whirled around and looked at them, “Can anyone tell me what the best defense against an incoming spell is?”

Multiple hands shot up around the room, “Corner.” No one questioned how he already seemed to know their names.

“The protego charm, sir.”

“Three points to Ravenclaw. Not a bad answer, but a shield can be overwhelmed and, in some cases, outright ignored. And protego certainly isn’t the only magical shield. Any other ideas?” He pointed to Neville, “Longbottom.”

“Dodging.”

Moody gave a nod, “Another good answer. Three points to Gryffindor. You don’t have to meet a spell head on with something of your own. Sometimes it’s just best to not be in the way to begin with. Anything else?” Suddenly his magical eye locked on Lavender, “Miss Brown, I expect you to pay attention in this class. Not be reading some magazine.” Sheepishly, Lavender returned her copy of *Teen Witch Weekly* to her bag. He looked to the raised hands, “Li.”

“A physical barrier professor, whether you summon it or conjure it,” she spoke softly but clearly, “No spell passes through solid objects.”

“Very good. Five points to Ravenclaw. No spell, not even an Unforgivable, can go through a solid barrier. You won’t be learning conjuration for a few years yet, and some of you will never manage that intricate magic. But transfiguration can work just as well.

“Depending on the situation, it can be used in tandem with summoning an object or levitating an object into the spells path.” He looked around the room, “Today you’re going to be using the Levitation Charm to block spells sent by your partners. This’ll also serve as an exercise to work on dodging, because if one of their spells gets through you better get out of the way.” He seemed to be done but then shouted loud enough that some people jumped, “Constant Vigilance!”

As he paired them up, it seemed it was going to be exactly the same in Defense as it had been in Potions as he started rattling off the names of Gryffindors and Ravenclaws, “Potter and Li.” When he was finished, Moody waved his wand and all the desks in the room stacked against the walls of the classroom giving them plenty of room for their spellwork.

Harry smiled across at the quiet Ravenclaw. Sue was a beautiful Chinese girl with jet black hair up in a loose ponytail that stood in stark contrast to her pale, porcelain skin. Her eyes were a deep mahogany-brown and almond shaped. She had a small nose and thin, red lips. Her hips and thighs were slender, and elegant. She was tall, the top of her head coming up to Harry’s nose.

He wouldn’t say that he knew the young woman well, but they did have some familiarity with one another thanks to Dueling Club. She was one of the best duelists in their year and he’d enjoyed their competitions in the past. Though to his memory, he’d always come out on top much to her consternation.

“Alright Sue?” He asked as they moved to their practice area. She gave him a brief look and nodded sharply. Some people would take her silence as rudeness, but it didn’t really bother him. He’d seen how focused she got when it came to spellwork firsthand in the past. They took up positions across from each other. Sue twirled her wand between her fingers. Ron was with Padma just beside them.

Moody waved his wand and a slew of objects filled the area between each student. Some were small which would be easiest to move, while others were larger and would be easier to use to intercept a

spell, "You'll be sending Bee-Sting Jinxes at one another, if you manage to hit. I want your partner to know it." Harry wasn't thrilled with the idea given what was happening with his magic, but he would just have to make do, "Students to my left will guard and dodge first. Begin!"

Harry's holly wand was in his hand, and already performing the swish and flick necessary to lift a table top from the pile of objects. It was circular and sturdy oak, "*Wingardium Leviosa*." The wood leapt to his command in an instance as he moved it between him and Sue. It came easily and he was happy for the morning's practice with Dumbledore. He managed to keep the object from flying up into the ceiling and whipped through the air with ease.

The young lady across from him hadn't given him even a second to get himself ready. Where others around the room had let their partners at least move their chosen shield from the pile, Sue was already brandishing her wand, "*Apepungo*." The yellow light of the Bee-Sting Jinx shot from her wand but never came anywhere near him. It impacted harmlessly against the wood, leaving behind a small spell-burn.

"Good Potter." Harry's attention snapped to the Professor beside him. One of Sue's manicured eyebrows shot into toward her hairline when his levitation spell didn't fail because of it. *How the hell can he be so quiet with that feckin' leg.* "Constant Vigilance! Be aware of your surroundings! Otherwise, you'll be taken out of the fight."

While he was distracted, Sue moved one step to the left and fired off another jinx. He winced as it impacted his shoulder. Rubbing at the quickly swelling welt beneath his clothing he nodded at the Professor, "Yes, sir." He shot a look in the direction of his partner, but she just remorselessly shrugged her shoulders. He couldn't really complain though, others around the room weren't having nearly as much luck as him.

There were multiple yelps as people struggled to consistently control their levitation charms and completely forgot there was another way to avoid the spells, "Dodge people! There is more than one way to avoid incoming spells!"

They carried on like that. But after her little trick, Harry wasn't going to give Sue the satisfaction of getting another hit in on him. Toward the end of his go, he was levitating multiple objects, giving her a very narrow window to shoot through. She managed but he just casually stepped to the side. He even avoided the random jinx sent his way by Moody which seemed to please the former Auror.

"Switch!" Moody was continually limping around the room, pointing out where each student could improve. Quite a few people were covered in welts, Ron had a nasty one on his neck. For his part, Harry only had that one niggling welt on his shoulder, though he was breathing heavily from the exercise. Across from him, it looked to him like Sue had worked even harder than him.

"*Apepungo*." The yellow light that shot from his wand was ridiculously bright, dwarfing anything else that had been cast in class. It sped toward Sue as she just barely managed to pull up a broken clay vase into its path. The spell shattered what remained of the vase much to his surprise. He'd tried to control his magic when he released the spell, but clearly there were some differences between a sustained spell like levitation and an instantaneous one.

Again, Sue's eyebrow moved toward her hairline in shock. Rubbing the back of his neck, he mouthed a quiet apology over to her. *Right, no more aiming directly at her. Don't think it'll be good if I manage to*

hit her. His next spell went wide just to her left though she did dodge to the right, and the next scorched the stone in front of her feet. Five more shots and five more obvious misses. Though, he still did his best to keep her blocking.

What he wasn't expecting after that was for her to walk over to him looking visibly irritated, "Aim. For. Me."

"Sue... I don't think that's a good idea."

"That's the assignment."

"I might hurt you." He tried to reason with her.

"Yes, Bee-Sting Jinxes tend to hurt." She was being obstinate, and he didn't understand why.

"I think you know **mine** will hurt worse if I hit you..."

"Sometimes I'm going to find myself against a stronger opponent in a duel. I need to be able to handle that and **if** you hit me, it will just be a lesson I won't forget." He sighed, defeated. She nodded and turned sharply, crossing back to the other side of the room.

For the rest of the lesson, Harry did as she asked, aiming right for her. To her credit, she did manage to intercept or dodge his spells, at least until near the end of the lesson. He started firing off his jinxes faster. He stopped when he managed to hit her in the knee.

Winced the second it made contact, he watched as the pain of it knocked the breath from her body, but she did manage to stop from yelling out. The area started swelling angrily instantly. Luckily, the longer they went the more he'd been able to start bringing it under some control. *At least it wasn't as bad as it would have been if I hit her with the first one.* He certainly wasn't going to continue when he could see she was in pain.

As Harry approached his partner, Moody called to the class, "That's enough for today people. There's healing salve on the table next to the door. Should have any welts cleared up by the time you're done with lunch." Everyone made for the door, "I want one length of parchment on the Summoning Charm for next lesson, as many of you found out levitation alone isn't the most effective way of bring an object to you in the middle of a fight."

"You alright, Sue?" Harry asked, concerned as her knee had almost doubled in size. He offered his arm as she winced and started limping.

She glanced up at him and did a fantastic job of keeping a straight face, "I'm... fine, Harry. Merlin only knows what happened to you over the summer. You were always good, strong too, but I don't remember your spells being quite so... dangerous."

Harry chuckled nervously, "Thanks..."

Sue looked him in the eye and gave him a tiny smile, "That won't stop me from finding a way to beat you this year." He liked that competitive light in her eye.

He gave her a toothy grin, "Oh... we'll see about that. Besides, we'll be on the same team. Might not get as many chances." Both were justifiably confident in their ability to make their year's dueling team.

That earned him a smirk, "You still have to beat your teammate in practice. And just because we're on the team won't mean Dueling Club goes away." *Well, that's true.* Harry grabbed Sue's bag for her and walked her to the door.

Moody was waiting for them, his magical eye fixed on him. He had two vials of healing salve in one hand, and just one in the other. He gave Sue two of them, "You're going to need a bit more, lass. Use all the first one now. The other after lunch and you should be set right." She accepted them silently and immediately uncorked one and applied it to her knee. She allowed herself a little relieved sigh as the swelling instantly started to reduce.

"Thanks, Harry." She gently moved herself from his grip, Should be able to walk myself now." She gave him one last glance before exiting the classroom, leaving him alone with the professor.

"You getting that under control?" Moody asked without preamble.

"Yes, sir. Dumbledore and I are working on it." There was no reason to pretend he didn't know what the professor was talking.

"Good, can't have you maiming every single person you're partnered with for the rest of the year." With that he handed him the vialing of healing salve and he made his way down to the hall for lunch. *Quite the interesting morning.*

It'd been a good first day of classes. New and old students alike getting accustomed to school. It was past curfew and only the prefects were roaming the halls of Hogwarts. Well, the prefects and some daring students that wanted to know more of the secrets of the old castle and even more daring couples that hadn't seen each other since the end of the last term. Daphne wasn't one of those people.

No, she was sequestered in the Slytherin dorms, snuggled beneath green and silver silk sheets. The dark curtains of her four-poster bed were drawn so that no one could see in. She didn't know if it was true of the other dormitories as well, but somebody who'd used the female Slytherin dorms in the past had the brilliant foresight to silence the sounds that came from each bed. So, while Millicent would snore, and Tracey tended to speak in her sleep, it wasn't a bother to anybody else trying to get some rest.

Trying was the important word there, because despite her best-efforts Daphne was lying there twisting and turning unable to find much-needed sleep. It'd been the same thing the night before, to the point where she'd been late to breakfast. *Well, that was part of the reason anyway.*

Stilling, she remembered what she'd done to finally relax, and exhaust, herself enough to enter the land of dreams. *Surely... surely, I don't need to do it again. Between last night and this morning and that free time I had between Potions and Transfiguration how am I still...* But no, despite her best efforts she still felt a warm neediness in her sex that just wouldn't go away until she took the matter into her own hands.

Daphne couldn't remember a time in her life where she'd been so consumingly horny and more worrying than anything to her was that it seemed to be fixated on one person. *If I didn't know any better, I'd think he slipped me a love potion.* But she knew that wasn't the case. *Even if it was in his nature, none of my other behaviors have changed. I'm not unable to stay away from him. Talking about him like he's the only bloke on the planet.*

So, while she was confident there wasn't anything unseemly that caused her new fascination, she still found her thoughts returning to Harry. *Those beautiful eyes...*

Unconsciously, one of her hands drifted down her silver satin nightgown, tracing the faint lines of her fit tummy. During the summer, she would sleep in the nude. She loved that naughty feeling it brought her, but at Hogwarts she couldn't be certain she wouldn't be rudely awakened by one of her dormmates. So, she went for the next best thing, a thin nightgown with nothing underneath.

As her fingers reached her heat, they ghosted along the wet lips of her needy little pussy, pulling a weak sigh from her throat. In her mind, they weren't her fingers gently prodding at the sensitive flesh. No, they were bigger and rougher, and attached to a veiny, well-muscled arm, "Oh... fuck yes, Harry."

Rubbing in tight circles around the lips of her pussy, she gave herself some desperately needed stimulation. One finger dipped into her core and came back covered in her slippery juices.

It was the fourth time in less than twenty-four hours she was doing this, and that fact alone made it feel naughty and depraved. *But so fucking right!* Just like pretty much every young person, Daphne had enjoyed a bit of self-exploration, but she'd never been so stupidly desperate for a climax. *Fuck... not enough!*

Reaching beneath her pillow, she searched aimlessly for a moment before her fingers wrapped around the thin length of her wand, "*Vibro.*" The laurel wood with a unicorn hair started to vibrate rapidly. She brought it down to her dripping sex and dropped the tip right on her tiny clit.

She gasped and threw her head back, incredibly thankful for the silencing on their beds. She ravenously pursued her peak, delirious for that wonderful sensation. And all the while, she was thinking of emerald eyes and dark hair. The way his big, hard cock would throb just for her. She wanted to feel it fill her and stretch her.

But she didn't just want to be taken by him, she wanted to take him. And as hard as she tried she couldn't quite reach her peak as she laid there with her back against her pillows.

There was something else she needed to finally cum. Grabbing the pillow from behind her head, she turned over and pushed up onto her knees, "*Vibro Maxima.*" This time the spell was aimed at the pillow and it started vibrating even faster than her wand. She pushed it between her thighs and immediately started humping her horny pussy against it, "Oh... fuck..."

Grabbing at the hem of her nightgown, she pulled it over her head. The soft satin glided across her hardened nipples and made her shudder. Straitening her arms, she placed her hands against the pillow as she rocked incessantly against the brilliantly buzzing fabric between her legs.

But as she closed her eyes, it wasn't a soft pillow beneath her finger or between her thighs. No, she imagined that her hands were digging into Harry's hard peck. His eyes were alight with pleasure as he was unable to stop himself from showing just how much he loved what she was doing. She relished every imagined little sigh she managed to pull from him. She grinded herself as hard as she could against the pillow, as she thought of Harry buried to the hilt inside of her.

With that titillating image playing out vividly behind her eyes, she finally reached her peak. "Oh..." A desperate, high-pitched squeal escaped her throat as her climax hit her like a storm. Her back was slick

with sweat as she started humping erratically against her pillow. Her juices spread across the pillowcase, soaking into the silk material as she quivered uncontrollably in the throes of her passion. She reached one hand back and dug it into the flesh of her own perky bubble butt as she rode out her peak.

By the time she was done, her chest was heaving with every desperate gasp of air she pulled into her lungs. Still naked, she crawled beneath her silk sheets. In the aftermath of her climax, she didn't even have the wherewithal to clean her pillow. Her own essence still stained the fabric as she curled up. Her wand lay discarded behind her. Peaceful, deep sleep found her in just a few quick seconds.

Little did she know, she wasn't the only witch in Hogwarts who needed to do that exact thing that night. Some just hadn't fought the urge the way she had.