

Snape's Worst Nightmare

The Sorting

(15th August, 1999. The Burrow)

"Say cheese!" said Molly Weasley.

"Cheese!" came the combined voices of her daughter and six daughters-in-law.

There was a flash of light. A picture was taken.

"I can't believe it," sniffed the emotional Weasley matriarch. "All my daughters are pregnant at the same time."

Her husband put his arm around her shoulders and hugged her tightly, a massive, joyous smile on his face. He held up a glass. "To the new members of the Weasley family," he toasted.

"Let the Weasley plan for world domination begin!" shouted Fred.

Amid cheers and laughter, all present drank to the toast. The party had just begun.

(1st September, 2011. The Burrow)

Arthur Weasley rolled over and draped his arm over his slumbering wife. His arm landed on an empty bed.

Arthur was used to Molly getting up before him; she had been the first to rise in the household for decades now. But it was very early, even for Molly. He threw on a dressing gown and slippers, groaning slightly at the creaking in his knees as he stood. Quietly, he slipped out the bedroom door and down the stairs.

The Burrow had been relatively quiet for years. Each of the children had married and moved out not long after the end of the last Dark War. Even now, over a decade later, Arthur still found the silence a little gloomy. Not even the periodic shrieking of the ghouls in the attic could make the old house sound as though it was still full of children, full of life.

From the base of the stairs, Arthur could make out the silhouette of his wife, sitting at the kitchen table. Judging from the pile of tissues on the table, she had been crying to herself. Again. She was looking at a framed photo, one that had become famous in the Weasley family.

With a smile, he made his way over to the table and sat next to her, wrapping his still strong arms around her quivering shoulders. "Molly. Come back to bed. It is too early to be getting up, even if it is September the first."

With a sniff, she replied, "I'm sorry, Arthur. I just miss them. I'd be getting up now to make sure they would all reach the station on time."

With a soft chuckle, Arthur hugged his wife tightly and placed a kiss on top of her head. Without letting go, he tilted his head to look at the photo, one that he already knew so well.

There was only one born Weasley in the frame, his little Ginevra. She had a glowing smile, one of her petite hands cupping her six months pregnant belly, the other waving at her doting father. To her right was Ron's wife, Hermione, one arm around Ginny, the other around Angelina, Fred's wife. Since they were both two months pregnant at the time, they didn't appear too different. The pair just kept looking at each other and laughing with obvious joy.

Katie Bell stood on the other side of Ginny, gently rubbing her very swollen stomach. She would later be the first to give Arthur and Molly a grandchild, well, grandchildren. She had married George soon after the birth of her twin boys.

A serene Penelope calmly stood with quiet grace and elegance, looking over the other girls in the picture before smiling back at Arthur.

Alison, Charlie's wife who he met while working in Romania, was kneeling in front of them all, only just showing signs of her pregnancy. She kept giggling, her calloused hand held up to her mouth, but she had the same mischievous glint in her eye that Arthur saw in his twin's everyday. Behind them all was the unearthly beautiful Fleur, who had married Bill just hours after he helped Harry defeat Voldemort. She had been five months along at the time. Even through the photo, her gentle movements were almost hypnotic when combined with her part-Veela charms.

It had been the announcement by Hermione and Angelina that they were both expecting that caused the famous photo to be taken. It meant that each and every one of their daughters (and both Molly and Arthur felt such about them all) were pregnant at the same time.

Arthur's chuckle grew into a low laugh as he remembered the celebration they had.

(15th August, 1999. The Burrow)

"I'm going to be a dad," said Ron vaguely, still blinking in shock. His wooden face had been a source of much hilarity and jokes by the twins. "A dad. Me."

Harry laughed and pushed a butterbeer into Ron's unresisting hands. "Just think. There will be a Potter and a Weasley together at Hogwarts again."

A look of mild alarm crossed the features of Albus Dumbledore as he realised something that had escaped the others present. He quickly counted on his fingers. "It would appear that there will be

at least six Weasleys and a Potter in one year level."

George leapt and landed on the couch next to the ancient wizard, making the old piece of furniture creak loudly. "Hey, that's right! Well, I think that the Gryffindor Quidditch team is organised for at least six years."

"Yeeeessss," said Dumbledore distractedly, his mind obviously on something else.

Arthur was desperately trying to coax Fred down from the kitchen table where he was doing a rather impromptu dance of joy at his impending fatherhood. Fleur, Katie and Hermione were all laughing at the spectacle.

Ginny's deep brown eyes sought out her husband's brilliant green ones. His unruly and impossible hair still bounced around, inviting her hands to run through the silky strands. He turned and locked his emerald eyes on her. They shared a special smile of perfect contentment within the blazing chaos around them.

(1st September, 2011. The Burrow)

"Come on, back to bed Molly," Arthur said, gently urging his wife from the chair.

"I miss them, Arthur. I miss them all terribly."

Arthur checked the watch Harry had given him last Christmas. "You only saw them seven hours ago. Remember?"

"Of course I remember! I just envy those girls the chaos in their lives." Molly sniffed again and reached for another tissue. "They all grew up so fast. Why couldn't they have stayed small for a little while longer?"

"Molly, let's--" He stopped, his mind thinking about a surprise for his wife.

She looked up at him. "Let's what?"

With a grin reminiscent of the twins, he looked down at her and gently kissed her forehead. "Let's go and get some sleep. Then I can take the morning off work and we can go down to London and say goodbye to them. Again."

Molly's eyes lit up with joy. "Oh, I married the best man in the whole world," she said, and gave her husband a kiss.

(1st September, 2011. Platform 9 & 3/4)

Harry stepped through the barrier to platform nine and three quarters. In his arms was his baby girl Margaret, her bright red hair already as wild as medusa's snakes. Two seconds later, Ginny stepped through herding the rest of their family.

"Grandma!" their eldest son shouted and ran off into Molly's arms. Harry smiled ruefully at the sight.

"What's the matter Harry?" his father-in-law asked, leaving Molly to her hugging.

"I owe Hermione a lot of money," he said. "She bet me that Molly wouldn't be able to stay away from Kings Cross today."

"I told you that you were throwing your money away," Ginny said from behind him.

Harry smiled fondly at his wife, then looked around the platform. "I remember seeing this for the first time. It hasn't changed much at all."

Ginny nodded and also looked. The polished, scarlet steam engine was still gleaming, the carriages still looked as comfortable as ever. One thing stood out though.

"Were there as many carriages when we were students?" she asked.

Harry shook his head. "This is the first of the baby-boomer generation. A record intake for Hogwarts in the last sixty years. Almost a hundred students."

Ginny looked mildly concerned. "Will you be able to handle that many?"

Harry nodded. "I've had a fair amount of experience over the last decade. I think I can control them."

Ginny noticed a gleam in his eye. "What?" she asked firmly.

He gave her a look of dismay. "How do you do that?"

"Aunty Ginny know you too well, Uncle Harry," came a voice from behind.

The Potters turned to see the arrival of Percy and Penelope's family. The Head of the Department of International Cooperation smiled at his daughter. "Yes, she has been watching him for a long time now."

Ginny blushed, still embarrassed at her past. "Shoo, you little pest," she said fondly to Percy's daughter. "Go bother your grandmother."

With a shout, the young girl streaked towards Molly and joined the hugging session.

"Good you see you, Perce. How's things?" asked Harry, shaking Percy's hand.

"Not too bad. Though last week there was a shocking display of immaturity by the Belgian Minister of Magic towards the French Minister. Things threatened to get quite out of hand before I stepped in."

"Managed to bore them into submission, did you Perce?"

Harry and Percy turned to face the new arrivals. A red haired man and a beautiful blonde woman herded their own children through the entrance. "Bill!" they said together.

Once again, for the first time in over a decade, Platform nine and three quarters turned into an informal Weasley family reunion. Wild children ran amok, all but a handful with flame red hair, terrorising the other families with their sheer numbers.

"Molly couldn't resist coming down to see them all off," Arthur told one of the other parents, who was looking vaguely ill at the scene. "Imagine sending twelve of your grandchildren off to Hogwarts in one go."

The muggle parent gave Arthur a wild look before making his apologies and beating a hasty retreat.

"I think you should leave them alone, Dad," said Bill, his long hair starting to go grey at the temples.

"Yeah, I think he felt a little concerned about sending his only child to a distant school with a dozen uncontrollable kids from the same family," came a voice from behind them. Both turned, an apprehensive smile on both their faces.

"George!" exclaimed Bill.

The twin rolled his eyes. "It's Fred, Bill."

"Sorry. You are looking fine!"

"Thanks," said Fred, turning to model his new clothes. "Acromantula silk, dragonscale fibers and Yeti wool for warmth." He smiled at his father. "Business is booming, George and I are opening our one hundred and twenty-fifth store next week. In Tokyo."

"Are you still competing against Zonko's?" Bill asked.

Fred rolled his eyes. "Please. You are so behind the times. We performed a hostile takeover of Zonko's business last year. We own all his stores too."

"How did you manage that?"

Fred grinned. "Our esteemed sister-in-law, one Hermione Granger-Weasley, has been our head corporate lawyer for the past year. She is frightening in the negotiation phase."

Bill and his father gave the twin identical smiles. "We can guess."

(1st September, 2011. Great Hall of Hogwarts)

Harry sat at the Head Table, looking out over the impatient students sitting at the four house tables. Dumbledore, still sitting in the massive chair in the middle of the table, gently cleared his throat to get his attention.

"You know, since you have kept your family under the *Fidelius* Charm, no one here knows that your children are starting at Hogwarts this year," Dumbledore said to Harry as they waited for Hagrid and McGonagall to bring the first years to the Great Hall.

Harry nodded, but several other teachers overheard the headmaster's comment.

"Congratulations, Harry. I didn't realise it was so long ago that you had your first child," said Professor Flitwick. "How are you going to handle teaching your own children?"

Harry gave the diminutive Charms professor a wry smile. "To tell you the truth, I've already started teaching them. They are probably at a mid-third year level in Defence. I wanted to make sure they had a better chance should our location become known to 'unsavory' types."

The teachers nodded somberly. The doors to the Great Hall were thrown wide open and Professor McGonagall led the largest group of first year students Harry had ever seen.

From this distance, it was impossible to make out the identities of individual students, but it was easy to see that several had red hair.

McGonagall produced the traditional three-legged stool and Sorting Hat, and everyone in the Hall silenced to listen to its song.

Half the students had been sorted before Harry's first child was called.

"Potter, James."

Harry watched as his eldest son strode forward and sat on the stool. At one end of the staff table, Professor Snape spurted wine through his nose at the announced name. He carefully dabbed at himself with his napkin, his glare daring anyone to even smile at his action.

Professor Sprout leaned over and whispered, "He looks just like another scrawny kid we taught here recently."

Harry smiled and nodded. His son was the spitting image of him at eleven. The Sorting Hat was placed on James' head, and Harry held his breath.

Hm, what do we have here? A Potter and a Weasley. Most interesting. Plenty of bravery, plus a stubborn streak a mile wide. Now, where shall I put you?

'I'm a Gryffindor,' James thought at the Hat.

You're sure, are you. Never doubted it for a minute?

'Nope. Never.'

The Sorting Hat sounded almost amused. *Indeed you haven't. Well, I can't argue with that, better be **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

The Gryffindor table burst into applause. James calmly took the Hat off and handed it back to Professor McGonagall before taking his seat at the table.

"Potter, Remus."

Harry's second son walked forward, more nervous than James. Professor Snape glared at Harry before returning his attention to the sorting.

"Twins?" asked Professor Sprout. Harry shook his head with a smile.

The Hat settled on Remus' head.

Well, well. Another one. Your brother has a certain streak of stubbornness that you lack.

'I know,' Remus thought nervously.

Not a bad mind, and your gentle nature would see you do well in Hufflepuff. But your ambitious side, though you've hidden it well, would cause difficulty there. Perhaps Slytherin is the place for you.

Remus snorted to himself.

No, I guess not. You are as difficult to place as your namesake.

'Uncle Remus was hard to place?'

*Oh, yes. Eventually, I had to put him where he would be supported if his secret was discovered. Yes, I think I'd better put you in **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

Once more, the Gryffindor table burst into applause. Remus joined his brother with relief.

"How can they not be twins?" Professor Sprout asked Harry. "They look absolutely identi-"

"Potter, Sirius."

"Triplets?" gasped Professor Sprout. Harry nodded and smiled down at his youngest son.

Professor Snape looked as though he had swallowed something sour. Even those not near him could see him mouth, 'Three Potters!' in disgust.

Once more, the Sorting Hat settled on a Potter's head.

Oh, please. Another one? Well, your father certainly named you all well. You definitely have your namesake's mischievous side.

'Thanks very much,' Sirius grinned.

*Yes, I'm sure you hold him in awe. His death was a massive blow to your father. Well, the few differences aside, you are too similar to be put anywhere but **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

A third time in a row, clapping erupted from the Gryffindor table. Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

"How on earth did Ginny manage to carry those three ruffians?" asked Professor Sinistra.

"Hey!" Harry protested under the cover of the applause. "Why would you think they are ruffians?"

"Probably because of whom they are named for," suggested Dumbledore, not looking at Harry.

Harry couldn't think of a rebuttal to that.

The sorting dragged on and on. Not a few stomach growls could be heard from the students waiting for their dinner. Finally Professor McGonagall got to the first of the flame haired students.

"Weasley, Alexander."

Harry leaned over to Professor Sprout. "Fred's youngest."

It took a few seconds for Harry's use of the word 'youngest' to sink in to the rest of the staff.

Aha! For some reason, I didn't think it would be too long before a Weasley graced this school once again.

'What about James, Sirius and Remus?'

Believe me, they are Potters to the bone, no matter who their mother was. You on the other hand, hmmm, at least you have more sense than your sire.

'I have more sense than my dad?' thought Alex unbelievably.

Oh, yes. Your father and his brother swapped their turns with me. I knew then that they would be trouble, so I thought to keep them together.

Alex thought this revelation about his dad and Uncle George was fascinating.

*I'm sure you do. Well, there is nothing for it. You definitely belong in **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

Again the Gryffindor table clapped loudly.

Harry looked to the other heads of houses. Professors Sprout, Flitwick and Snape all wore varying degrees of relief on their faces.

"Brace yourselves," Harry said.

They all looked at him curiously.

"Weasley, Arthur."

"Fred's eldest," said Harry.

The three house heads suddenly looked nervous again.

Yes, I rather thought you'd be next.

'That didn't take a great deal of logical thought.'

Hmmm, a Weasley with wit instead of a temper. Unusual.

'Hmmm, a dilapidated piece of haberdashery giving personality advice. Unusual.'

*Oh, you are brave one, my boy. Only one place for you. **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

Amid the applause, some concern from the staff table was evident. Young Arthur Weasley sat down at the last available space at the Gryffindor table. Professor Dumbledore looked at the full table, then at the other houses, noting that there were several spaces free on each. He then looked at the remaining dozen students, noting the number of red heads.

With a sigh, Dumbledore waved his hand and the Gryffindor table extended itself. A number of faint pops and some elves rushed to set places. Seconds later, they vanished, their task complete.

With that small interruption out of the way, the sorting continued.

"Weasley, Brianna."

A thin, lanky girl with long wavy copper hair walked forward with a calm, but determined expression.

"Ron and Hermione's daughter," said Harry to head off the inevitable question.

"Ah, I'm looking forward to teaching that one." said Professor Flitwick.

My dear, you are the result of a most remarkable union. Your mother was most difficult to place, though your sire had only one possible home here.

'I don't mind where you put me. I'm sure you'll put me where I belong.

*Yes, most intriguing. Ravenclaw or Gryffindor. Well, with the five thugs I've already placed there, I think I'd better put you there too, as a balancing influence. **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

It was obvious from McGonagall's expression that this was one Weasley she was glad to accept into her house.

Harry clapped with enthusiasm. Ron and Hermione would be over the moon.

"Weasley, Charles."

The tallest first year since Hagrid stepped forward to take a seat. Even at eleven, he was almost six feet tall.

"Bill's son," Harry informed the teachers. Snape looked venomous.

Charles looked almost comical sitting on the small stool, his knees up around chest height.

What's this? Another Weasley? Well, I can't say it's a surprise.

'Can I please go with my cousins?'

Perhaps, you certainly have the innate nobility for that house. But your gentle nature and determination certainly make you suitable for Hufflepuff.

'I'd like to be with my cousins though, sir.'

*My goodness. A polite one. Well, I'd best put you in the same house, if only so you can protect the others from their pranks. **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

Some snickering followed this announcement at another red head joined the scarlet and gold table.

"Weasley, Christopher," said McGonagall, her voice a little strained.

Professor Flitwick looked down the table at Harry. "Just how many Weasleys are joining us this year?" he asked.

Harry just smiled wickedly. "That's George's eldest."

Several smiles on the staff table vanished as the Sorting Hat settled down again.

Another one. Ah, but what is this? Burning ambition, oh yes. I haven't seen anything so bright as this for a long time. A desire to prove yourself is there too. A truly unique mind as well, my goodness. Where am I going to put you?

'Not Slytherin. Anywhere but there,' Chris thought determinedly.

*Are you sure? Your Uncle was sure too, and he turned out all right. The deputy headmistress isn't going to like this but, **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

The snorts of amusement were louder this time, McGonagall's face had paled spectacularly. Compared to her, the Bloody Baron looked as though he had a tan.

Harry looked down at Snape and noted that the potions master looked ill. "I guess the thought of controlling all those Weasleys is a bit daunting," he whispered.

The teachers who heard him nodded their heads in total agreement.

"Weasley, Heidi."

The laughter got louder as Percy's daughter walked to the chair and sat down.

"Percy's daughter," said Harry. "Truly her father's daughter."

The idea of another Percy Weasley at Hogwarts brought mixed reactions from the teachers.

What on earth is going on? Was the world taken over by Weasleys and no one informed me?

Heidi huffed to herself.

*Ah, yes. You definitely have your father in you. **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

A groan spread throughout the Great Hall, and several murmured conversations started. It was obvious that the topic was the Weasleys and their domination of Gryffindor.

Professor McGonagall's hands shook slightly as she continued to read the list of new students.

"Weasley, Isabella."

The open laughter at another Weasley being called soon hushed, as Fleur's daughter gracefully drifted to the chair, her long straight golden-red hair gently swaying with her movements. She turned and daintily took a seat.

"Bill's daughter." supplied Harry, but no one was listening to him.

Isabella's Veela charm was obviously working to perfection. It was only her large twin brother's cracking of his knuckles that forced attention away from her.

It's a plot, I'm sure of it.

'I beg your pardon?'

*Never mind. You don't have the infamous Weasley temper, so I think I need to put you where your brother and cousins can deter any unwanted attention. **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

The groan that came from the other three tables was one of despair. McGonagall visibly swallowed to clear her throat.

Harry glanced at Snape. The man looked almost defeated.

McGonagall's voice almost cracked when she continued.

"Weasley, William."

The only word that could describe the noise from the students was... sniggering. As one, the teachers turned to Harry. He shrugged. "Charlie's boy."

Snape had his face in his hands. "Another one. Not another one," he muttered.

They have got to be kidding!

'What?'

*What do they need me for? Any Weasley goes straight into **Gryffindor!***

"Gryffindor!"

A groan of amusement swept through the Great Hall, and the students burst into laughter. Even the Gryffindor students joined in, applauding loudly to welcome Charlie's son.

The Hall finally fell silent, as everyone waited to hear the name of the next student.

Professor McGonagall paused not for dramatic effect, but to calm herself enough to finish.

"Weasley, Zachary."

The laughter rose again. This time none of the teachers looked at Harry as he said, "George's other twin."

Rabbits. You're all rabbits.

'Pardon?'

Gryffindor!

"Gryffindor!"

A stamping of feet and a cheering from the Gryffindor table signaled the arrival of the last Weasley. A chant of *WE GOT THEM ALL, WE GOT THEM ALL* went through the ranks.

Harry sat quietly clapping on the staff table, the only teacher looking at the proceedings. All the others had covered their faces with their hands.

Professor Snape was shaking. "Nine. Nine of them. And three Potters. I can't handle this."

Harry noticed that seemed to be a common complaint of all the teachers. Dumbledore alone smiled to himself.

"What are you so happy about Albus?" asked the Charms professor.

"Why Filius! Nothing, except that I'm not teaching any classes this year."

Snape's Worst Nightmare The Hogwarts Express

Harry silently looked on as his three sons tore around the platform. He had one arm around his wife's waist, the other holding his youngest daughter, Margaret. Ginny held the hand of their other daughter. Little Lily Potter looked relieved that her three older brothers would be leaving the home for ten months. Try though she might, Harry knew her well enough to see that she would miss them once they were gone.

It was only another three years before Lily herself would be heading off to Hogwarts. Harry sighed to himself as he listened to Percy drone on about the situation he managed to resolve between the French and Belgian Ministers. All his children were growing up, and no amount of magic would stop that.

Harry stiffened as he noticed the slicked back platinum blond hair on an older student bearing down on Remus. This will be interesting, he thought to himself.

"Out of my way, Scruffy!" shouted Damien Malfoy, his prefect badge prominently displayed on his lapel. With a shove, the newly appointed prefect pushed the smaller student to the ground as he stormed past.

Remus hit the platform hard. He looked up reproachfully at the prefect, wondering what he had done wrong. Malfoy stopped and turned to face him.

"What? What are you looking at me for?" the Slytherin prefect asked, his voice as smooth as honey.

"You pushed me over," replied Remus, still stunned enough that coming up with a witty answer was beyond him.

Malfoy's eyes glittered with malevolent glee. "Are you accusing a prefect of *deliberately* pushing you over?" he asked dangerously.

Before Remus could respond, a voice from behind them answered for him. "I suppose it would be pointless for someone to expect that a *Slytherin* could remember what he did only seconds ago."

Damien spun around to confront the speaker, only to find that no one was there.

Remus recognized the dry voice of his cousin Arthur. Rather obviously, Arthur had somehow

managed to obtain Uncle Fred's invisibility cloak.

A soft footstep to Remus' right caught his attention. He heard a quiet swish of moving fabric, and suddenly Remus found himself under the cloak with his cousin. Arthur held up a finger to his lips, a grin on his mischievous face.

Malfoy, unable to locate the person who taunted him, spun back to continue berating his latest victim. "No one makes a fool of a... Malfoy," he started, before realising that there was no one there to be intimidated.

Laughter erupted around the Slytherin prefect as he turned in a complete circle to try and locate his initial target. Damien's face flushed with rage and he stormed onto the train.

Arthur silently helped Remus to his feet, the pair still safely ensconced under the precious cloak. "Come on," whispered Arthur. "We need to find a safe place to take this off without my father seeing."

"I can't believe you stole Uncle Fred's invisibility cloak!" Remus whispered sharply back.

"Borrowed. I borrowed it."

"Were you planning on returning it?"

"At some stage."

"Like when?"

Arthur snorted, but quickly covered his mouth to cover the noise. "Once I'd saved up enough galleons to buy my own, of course."

The pair slowly made their way through the crowd towards one end of the platform. Remus noticed a tall, thin figure ahead of them. He groaned softly and closed his eyes.

"What?" asked Arthur.

"Dad. He's in front of us."

"So? He can't see us."

"Art, when was the last time anyone, and I mean anyone, managed to get away with anything in front of my father?"

Arthur frowned in thought. "I can't remember. I know Dad and Uncle George keep trying to play pranks on him, but it always seems to backfire on them."

Remus nodded. "I have never in my life seen him taken in by anyone. He can always see right through any prank, joke or trick you care to try."

"What about your mum? Aunt Hermione told me that she keeps stealing his socks. The whole family thinks it's funny. He can't seem to stop that."

Remus shook his head. "He has turned that around on her. He just keeps stealing them back. She can't work it out, since he doesn't leave the room. His socks just appear back in his closet. It drives her nuts."

Arthur gave him a doubtful look. "Anyway, we're not trying to play a prank on him. We're just trying to get past him to get out from under this cloak. I want to have it with me at Hogwarts."

"I hope you're right."

The two of them slowly made their way past the final throng.

"Did you know that invisibility cloaks were put on the list of prohibited items a couple of years ago?" Harry asked his wife.

Remus and Arthur froze in shock.

Ginny frowned at her husband. "Yes, why on earth did you bring that up?"

Harry shrugged. "I was just pondering what would be an appropriate penalty for a student having one."

Arthur and Remus looked at each other, dread evident in their eyes.

Ginny's frown deepened momentarily, then her eyes lit up with understanding.

"What did you have in mind?" she asked coyly.

"Perhaps an hour or so in a lecture with a particularly boring Uncle of the student in question," he said, tapping his chin in thought. He then turned and looked straight at Remus.

Harry watched the pair huddle together under Fred's invisibility cloak after humiliating Damien Malfoy. It took a fair bit of acting to keep the two boys in his line of sight without seeming that he was staring at something.

That's one of the problems with having your own eyes, Harry mused. In his seventh year he had studied Alastor Moody's magical eye for a project, and had imbued his glasses with the same charms over the course of several months. As long as he kept his son and nephew in the frame of his glasses, he could 'see' them under the cloak.

The pair struggled closer. Remus caught sight of him and visibly groaned. It took a great deal of Harry's self control to keep from smiling.

As soon as the two troublemakers got close enough for them to hear his voice, Harry said out loud, "Did you know that invisibility cloaks were put on the list of prohibited items a couple of years

ago?"

Ginny turned to face her husband, her elfin face with a small frown. "Yes, why on earth did you bring that up?"

Harry gave his shoulders a theatrical shrug. "I was just pondering what would be an appropriate penalty for a student having one."

He watched with delight as his brilliant wife realised what was going on. "What did you have in mind?" she asked, in a seductive tone.

He tapped his chin as if deep in thought. "Perhaps an hour or so in a lecture with a particularly boring Uncle of the student in question," he said as he turned to face his son.

Remus saw his father's eyes on them and closed his own eyes in defeat. "Busted," he said, his shoulders slumping.

Arthur looked at him in shock. "But how?"

Harry reached forward and whipped off the cloak. He raised an eyebrow and waited.

"Um. Hi, uh, Dad."

"Yeah, uh, hi, Uncle Harry."

"We were, we were just, um..."

Harry stayed silent, waiting patiently.

"Remus fell, and er, I was, um..."

"Yeah, we, um..."

Harry's emerald eyes flickered over the two boys. With a practised flick of his wrist, the cloak was folded and draped over one arm. He then reached out and minutely adjusted Remus' tie. He held their gaze for a moment longer before gracing them with a tiny sly smirk and walked off to speak with another parent.

Remus and Arthur let out the breath they were holding and visibly sagged, both feeling like they had just escaped from certain death.

The train had been rumbling north for only ten minutes before Remus had been pressured into telling his cousins what had happened on the platform. All twelve were crammed into one carriage to hear the tale.

"That prefect Malfoy is a disgrace," huffed Heidi. "I can't imagine what the teachers were thinking when they appointed him."

Brianna nodded. "He is a disgrace, but it is only the head of house that appoints prefects."

"Isn't Professor Snape the head of Slytherin?" asked Charlie.

"Yes," replied James, looking up at his enormous cousin who had elected to stand. There would be no room for the others with him on the seat. "But I think he obviously made a mistake this year."

Brianna covered her mouth in shock. "The Professors don't make mistakes!" she gasped.

Isabella rolled her perfect eyes. "Oh please, Bri. Drop the act."

Brianna lowered her hand and snickered. "Sorry 'Bella, I couldn't resist."

"Yeah, well, there are no teachers on the train, you don't need to..."

"Yes there is," interrupted Zachary. "I saw Professor McGonagall get on the train at the station."

The eleven other occupants digested this information.

"You know," started Sirius, "I don't really like that Malfoy."

James nodded, a huge grin on his face. "I think we'd better have his prefect status revoked. I can't see he would be at all fair to us, given the family history."

Isabella looked shocked. "How do you intend to do that?" she asked.

James and Sirius wore identical grins. Remus was looking at them both nervously, but also had a smile on his face.

"Well, 'Bella," replied James. "Malfoy gets out of his prefect meeting in about an hour. Sirius, you find the head girl. Remie, you get to..."

Minerva McGonagall looked up as the door to her carriage opened. For a second she thought the Defense Professor had managed to turn himself into a child.

"Excuse me, Professor. May I ask you a few questions?"

The deputy headmistress closed her book with a thump. "Of course, child. I don't think I need to ask who your parents are."

The boy smiled and nodded. He held out his hand in greeting. "Remus Potter, Ma'am."

With a small smile at the formality of the greeting, McGonagall shook the small hand. "Minerva McGonagall, but you will be required to address me as Professor McGonagall once we reach school."

Remus nodded. "Thank you, Ma'am."

"Please take a seat, Mr. Potter."

Remus thanked her again and sat down opposite her. "What can I do for you?" she asked.

Remus frowned. "My Uncles have been telling me stories about their sorting. I don't believe them in most things, and I doubt I have to wrestle a troll, but I was wondering what we had to do to be sorted?"

McGonagall rolled her eyes at a particularly bad memory, but her smile remained. "This would be your Uncles Fred and George, I presume?"

Remus nodded. "I don't normally believe them, but I was just wondering, since my mum told me that dad and Uncle Ron rescued Aunt Hermione by jumping on a troll in their first year..."

McGonagall's smile vanished. "Indeed they did. It was a very brave, but foolhardy act on their part. I believe I awarded them house points for 'sheer dumb luck' afterwards."

Remus smiled at this. Smoothly, he continued to talk to McGonagall, drawing out more and more of his family's history.

"Hey look! It's the bouncing ferret's son!"

Damien Malfoy spun around, a snarl on his aristocratic features. He saw a messy bunch of dark hair race round a corner. With a growl, the Slytherin prefect tore after his insulter.

Malfoy rounded the corner of the corridor, only to trip over a conjured piece of rope, which disappeared as soon as he turned to look at it. At this point several nearby compartments opened, and once again Damien Malfoy was under the scrutiny of dozens of eyes after making a fool of himself.

He stood, patted himself down, stuck his nose in the air and walked down the corridor, fuming to himself.

Looking in each of the compartments on the way, Malfoy found the one that blasted kid was hiding in and almost ripped the door open.

"You thought you'd get away from me, eh?" he said threateningly, reaching for the small boy.

"Get away from you, Malfoy?" came an unwanted voice. "What do you mean?"

Damien turned to face Felicity McDougal, Head girl and Ravenclaw prefect. "That little pest insulted me and ran. Since he doesn't have a house yet, I was going to, um, give him a stern talking to."

Felicity raised her eyebrows questioningly. "When did he insult you, Malfoy?"

"Less than two minutes ago, in the corridor."

The head girl narrowed her eyes. "He has been in this compartment talking to me for the last half hour, Malfoy. I think I'd better inform the headmaster that you are abusing your prefect privileges."

"Nonsense," Damien scoffed. "He just ran in here."

Felicity stood and towered over the shorter prefect. "He most certainly did not! You dare accuse me of lying?" she screeched.

At this outburst, several people started crowding around the doorway, looking in at the commotion, gasping at the fact that Malfoy had been suggesting that the head girl was a liar. Damien was distracted enough to miss the fact that the majority of the new arrivals had red hair.

"I know there is bad blood between your two families, but really, to take it out on a first year before he even gets to Hogwarts is simply unforgivable. Detention Mr. Malfoy, and twenty points from Slytherin for your behaviour."

Damien fairly shook with rage, looking directly at Felicity, willing her to crack under his powerful and intimidating gaze.

Felicity simply stared down at him. It would appear to anyone present that she had several goldfish at home, and practised her stare on them.

Damien's eyes started watering. A mocking "Don't cry, Malfoy," came from the crowd outside the door.

Growling in frustration, the Slytherin prefect broke the stare and spun around to face the speaker. Unable to pick the unfamiliar voice out from the crowd gathered in the doorway, he pushed through the throng and stormed out of the compartment and down the carriage hall.

The snickers and mocking laughter followed him all the way to his own compartment.

Felicity looked down at Sirius. "I'm sorry he acted like that. I know that your fathers hated each other with a passion. My Aunt was in their year at school."

Sirius nodded and put on what he hoped was a brave face. "Thank you. Um, thank you for sticking up for me."

Felicity smiled. "There is no need to thank me, that's what we prefects are here for."

Sirius smiled and bounced on his seat. "So, what stories has your Aunt told you about my father and Malfoy's?"

James watched Malfoy exit his brother's compartment purple in the face. He turned to Zach and William. "Right, Zach, go check on Remie, I'll set up one more try."

Zachary gave James the biggest grin. "Go for it Jimmy. Come on Bill," he said, turning to his red-

haired cousin. "Let's keep an eye on that bugger until Jimmy is ready."

William nodded. "I'll get Chris to help."

Damien Malfoy fumed to himself. Somehow that little bastard had convinced the head girl to lie for him. Well, as soon as he showed his head out of that compartment he'd be sorry.

The old lady with the trolley slowly trundled down towards his compartment. Malfoy snarled at her slow progress. He stood and reached for his purse, his stomach growling loudly.

"Hello, Ma'am. I missed the trolley before. May I buy something from you now?" James asked sweetly.

The old lady smiled down at him. "Of course, dear. What is it you'd like?"

As James picked a selection of items guaranteed to stain clothes she continued to speak.

"You look remarkably like a young boy I remember. You wouldn't happen to be a Potter would you?"

James nodded. "My father is Harry Potter. He told me to be sure to be polite to you."

"Oh, that's so sweet of him to remember me. Go on, take what you want, I won't tell."

A smile split James' face. "Thank you very much, Ma'am. I really appreciate it."

Damien had just finished his first pastry when he looked up to see the smirking face of the first year he had knocked over. With a roar he lunged to the door, yanking it open.

What threw him off was the fact that the first year didn't pull back in fear. Sparkling green eyes betrayed their amusement as several stains spread down the front of Malfoy's robes.

With a second, louder roar the Slytherin prefect chased the younger student down the halls.

James watched as the blond boy jumped straight at him, though the intimidating effect was spoiled by the fact that the blond prefect had to stop in time so he didn't crash nose first into the door. With a mighty yank, the door was wrenched open, just in time for James to toss the bundle of food he had constructed.

Beetroot featured prominently, along with pumpkin juice and blueberry jam. Malfoy's blond hair clashed horribly with the cacophony of colours on his now stained shirt.

With a cheeky grin, James bolted down the corridor, an enraged prefect on his heels.

Remus knew his brother was in danger; he felt it in his bones. The three brothers had always known when one of the others was in danger. They could even feel which brother it was who needed help.

He could feel James running closer, knew he was only a few steps away. The door to the next compartment slammed shut. He looked up at the Transfiguration Professor, who was looking curiously at the source of the sound.

"Please forgive me interrupting you, Professor, but there is one thing I've always wanted to ask you."

McGonagall nodded.

"Could I see your animagus form?"

"Who told you I was an animagus?"

Remus bit his lower lip and looked down at his hands. "I, I read up on them when I was small. I just always wanted to meet one."

McGonagall smiled again, and suddenly a grey tabby was sitting where Professor McGonagall had been.

Damien stormed down the passageway, looking in each of the compartments for his quarry. With a shout, he saw his target, sitting in the corner of an empty compartment. The door was almost torn off its hinges.

"No one here to save you now, you little bastard," spat Malfoy, his face enraged. He lunged at Remus, grabbing him by the front of his robes and lifted him off the seat. Damien drew back one fist and was about to punch Remus when a vice-like grip clamped down on his wrist.

Malfoy spun around to look directly into the furious eyes of the Transfiguration professor. With a gulp, he lowered his victim to the floor and stammered, "P-p-professor! W-what are you doing here?"

"Ensuring that the ride to school goes smoothly, Mr. Malfoy. Perhaps you would care to explain why you are physically molesting a student?"

"Um, he stained my robes."

McGonagall's lips were as straight and hard as any ruler. With a quick flick of her wand, no stain remained. "You are a wizard, Mr. Malfoy. As such, something as simple as a stained shirt is no cause for causing bodily harm. Waiting as long as you did to respond is simply inexcusable."

"Waiting? But Professor! I just chased him in here now!"

"I beg your pardon? Are you saying this boy just arrived in this compartment?"

Malfoy nodded. "I just chased him in here. You weren't here to see."

McGonagall's eyes bulged with fury. "Perhaps you missed the presence of a grey cat on the seat

opposite, Mr. Malfoy."

Damien Malfoy swallowed loudly.

"For your baseless accusations and abuse of prefect power, a wee-, no, a month of detention, see me each night in my office this September at seven. For lying to a professor, fifty points from Slytherin. For assaulting a student..." she reached over and plucked the prefect badge from his lapel. "Good day, Mr. Malfoy. Professor Snape will assign another fifth-year Slytherin as prefect in your place."

With a murderous look at Remus, Malfoy started to leave the compartment.

"One last thing, Mr. Malfoy."

The look of hatred turned to one of fear. "Yes, Professor?"

"I never want to see you speak to Mr. Potter here again. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Professor," he spat, and left.

Nine Weasleys and three Potters sat around the end of the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall. Professor McGonagall had just dropped what looked suspiciously like a prefect pin in front of Professor Snape.

"I wonder what his reaction will be?" mused Chris Weasley.

They all watched as the Potions Professor fixed his steely gaze on Damien Malfoy. The former prefect looked down at his plate and tried to ignore his head of house.

The story of Malfoy's return to the non-prefect ranks had been spread throughout the Gryffindor table, and sniggers could be heard all over the hall.

Malfoy looked up at the scarlet and gold table, and fixed his gaze on the three Potters there, all of them smiling merrily at him. As one, they raised their goblets to him in a silent salute.

"Well," said James, turning back to the others. "The Potters and Weasleys are back. We are all in the same house, and we managed to strip a git of his 'decoration'."

"To Hogwarts," toasted Sirius. "May it be the site of many more Gryffindor accomplishments."

"To Hogwarts," intoned the rest of the table, and they all drank deeply. None of them noticed the Defense professor smile, and drink deeply to the toast himself.

Snape's Worst Nightmare The First Potions Lesson

Professor McGonagall stared at the board in front of her with a determined, quiet intensity. The chess pieces still standing on the board had recently been specifically charmed to be absolutely silent and still. The Deputy Headmistress would tolerate no interruptions. The Defense professor stood from the comfortable armchair from which he was relaxing and raised his arms above his head. Letting out a low growl of satisfaction, he finished stretching his arms and wandered over to look at the battle engaged, before offering a particularly unwelcome suggestion.

"Why didn't you just buy a muggle chess set?" Harry asked her.

Her intense glare, known the country over at being able to reduce a student to tears, had no effect on Harry, who had been on the receiving end far too many times.

"If you have nothing productive to say, *Potter*, say nothing," she said scathingly.

Harry shrugged, unconcerned with her tone. "Very well, *Minerva*."

McGonagall sighed. "I'm sorry, Harry. I just think that Mr. Weasley has an unpleasant surprise coming up, and I cannot for the life of me see it."

Harry nodded and looked at the chessboard in front of the Transfiguration professor, running the tip of one finger slowly over his lips, deep in thought. Having played Ron hundreds of times in his life, and losing all but one of those games, Harry was a better than average player. Even so, after several minutes of examining the board, he had no idea what Ron's plan of attack was. Looking at the complex array of pieces still in play, Harry shook his head.

"How long has this game been going?" he asked.

"Three months, twelve days," McGonagall said absently, still studying the board.

Harry raised his eyebrows. "You still send you move to him by owl?"

McGonagall nodded. "This game is the decider. We are currently one game apiece."

Knowing the skill level of both players, Harry felt he had to ask. "How many games have ended in a stalemate since either of you won a game?"

McGonagall looked up at him and frowned in thought. "Seventeen, I believe."

"Then why is this game the decider?"

Harry had never seen such an arch expression on the Transfiguration Professor's face. "Because, Hermione has unilaterally decided that this will be the last game we play. Play by owl anyway. Apparently, Ronald is spending far too much time and attention on our games and not enough time and attention, ahem, on her," said McGonagall. "For her liking, anyway," she continued, a wicked smirk on her face.

Harry chuckled to himself before an enormous crash attracted his attention.

The black-clad Potion Master slammed the door to the staff common room hard enough that the chess pieces jumped on the board. Staring straight at Harry, the purple-faced professor approached, apparently so furious he was unable to speak a word. Traces of spittle had collected in the corner of the fuming teacher's mouth.

With a bright smile, Harry asked, "So, how was the first lesson with your first year Gryffindor and Slytherin students?"

"You... You... You..." snarled Snape, his quivering finger being shaken under Harry's nose.

"So, not so good then?" Harry said brightly.

With a huge deep breath, through clenched teeth, Snape managed to force out, "You could say that."

McGonagall raised her eyebrows. "Well, Severus? What happened?"

Snarling at her, Snape began telling them.

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The dungeon classroom was as full as it had ever been in living memory. Even after the Dark Lord's first fall, there were generally less than a dozen new students in each house. With nearly a hundred new students this year, it was expected that around two dozen would be placed in each house.

Gryffindor took over a third of the new students in the sorting, due mainly to those damn Weasleys.

Now, more than sixty students were crammed into the tiny dungeon classroom. Even seated three to a desk, there were still some without a chair.

Snape strode around the room, casting some much needed expansion charms. Once there was enough room for all the new students he immediately wrapped himself in his cloak and gave them the speech he saved for the first lesson. One designed to instill the fear and respect he craved.

Only now, in the cavernous room, the effect was ruined. His deep, silky voice didn't reach the outer edges now, and the Gryffindors were smirking amongst themselves.

"-I will teach you how to brew fame, bottle-," he said, before making a disturbing discovery.

The three Potters and nine Weasleys were mouthing his speech, word for word.

"-glory, and even... put a stopper..." he continued, changing the pace and tone.

It didn't work, the nine red-headed and three emerald-eyed students all mocked him, and kept miming his speech.

"-in death," Snape finished.

'In death', the Potters and Weasleys mouthed.

Snarling at them, Snape was about to launch a blistering verbal attack on their mental capabilities and parentage when a Slytherin student at the back raised her hand.

"What?" he snapped at her.

"Um, Professor. We couldn't hear you back here. Could you repeat what you said?"

The Dozen Nightmares' faces lit up, as it became obvious they would have another chance to mock him.

~~~

"The Dozen Nightmares?" Harry exclaimed, a huge smile on his face. "Do you have any idea how pleased they will be that they have been given a collective name by their teacher on only their second day?"

Snape snarled at him. "It was obvious that the pair you ran with would be bad news too, Potter. 'Terrible Trio', I believe you were called by the staff."

"By only yourself, if I recall correctly," said McGonagall primly.

Harry shrugged, again unconcerned. "We didn't become close friends until after Halloween in our first year."

"Yes, I recall," Snape snarled. "The three of you decided that you didn't need to follow instructions given specifically for your own safety."

Harry tilted his head to one side, a mocking smile on his face. "I don't recall seeing you going after the troll either, Severus. Didn't you bolt for the third floor?"

The low growl emanating from Snape's throat wouldn't have been out of place coming from

Remus Lupin during the full moon. "You know what I was doing, Potter!" he snapped.

Harry nodded casually. "That's right. Great work by the way, you did such a fantastic job of protecting the philosopher's stone that three first year students were able to get past all the defenses."

Snape's eyes bulged in their sockets. Before he could respond, the door to the staff room opened and Dumbledore entered. "Ah, Severus," the headmaster said. "How was your first-year class?"

Harry and McGonagall immediately put on poker faces as Snape whirled around to face Dumbledore. "Six of my Slytherins are in the hospital wing, Albus," he spat.

"Really? Good grief, what on earth happened?"

~~~

The oily Potions Master strode around the enlarged classroom, snarling and glaring at the young Gryffindors. Normally, the claustrophobic feeling of a small classroom would enhance the silent, sullen menace dripping from the former Death Eater.

Now, Snape just looked like an antisocial git.

One of those damn Potters and two Weasleys were sitting together. Snape glanced down at the parchment he held, the only good thing Harry Potter ever made (in his opinion). The parchment sheet was obviously modeled on the Marauder's Map, it magically mapped who was sitting at which desk in a specific classroom. Ah, 'Sirius' Potter. Wonderful, he thought. Bill Weasley's children, Isabella and Charles sat with him and worked at one stone bench on the edge of the classroom. Sirius was scanning the room, a calculating look on his face.

"Mr. Sirius Potter," he snapped, staring at the student in question. "Perhaps you could tell me what makes the faces of your fellow classmates are more interesting than the potion you are supposed to be working on?"

Sirius grinned right back, setting Snape's temper boiling. "I'm James, sir."

Snape froze. Did he look down at the sheet, confirming who the student was and make a fool out of himself if he was wrong, or just accept the little bugger's word and make a fool out of himself if he was right?

Figuring that most of history's great leaders lived by the maxim that it didn't matter if you were right or wrong, just as long as you were certain, Snape grinned maliciously. "Five points from Gryffindor, Mr. *Sirius* Potter, for pretending to be another student."

The smirk disappeared from Sirius' face, and Snape turned his back on the Potter-spawn. A table of three Slytherin students were smirking to themselves at Sirius' discomfort when Isabella turned to face their table, and smiled seductively at them.

One by one, the Slytherin trio starred straight at the hauntingly beautiful part-veela. One of them, who was carefully pouring powdered basilisk tongue into the potion, shyly smiled back.

Isabella slowly slid her tongue out and tantalisingly ran the tip over her upper lip, then half closed her eyes and daintily puckered her lips, as if kissing them from a distance.

The shocked students were hurled backwards as the excess basilisk tongue added to the potion combined with the chilled vampire blood already within. The incident was later described in the Gryffindor common room by Brianna Weasley as a 'rather vigorous exothermic reaction'.

~~~

Harry smirked. "So three students from your house were hospitalised because they were distracted by a pretty girl?"

As Snape purpled, Dumbledore smiled and gently chided his Defense Professor. "Harry, please. I seem to recall you having a similar reaction to a Miss Weasley at one time. Your sixth year here, wasn't it?"

Harry had the good grace to blush. "Yes, well..."

Even in his enraged state, Snape reveled in watching the normally unflappable Defense Professor's embarrassment. "Those terrors of yours had better be brought under control, Potter!"

McGonagall, Dumbledore and Harry all raised an eyebrow in unison at this. "I'm sorry," Harry said. "I think I misheard you. Are you saying that you are unable to, and are requesting that *I* control some of your students?"

Snape hesitated, thinking over his demand. "Well, no. But Merlin help me, if they cause another student's injury I'll have them expelled!"

Harry's face turned grave. "If they cause injury to another student I'll pull them out of the school myself. What happened?"

Growling to himself, Snape continued.

~~~

Furious at the part-veela for causing such a disruption, Snape assigned a detention to her. Snickers all over the classroom could be heard from the Slytherin students.

James looked at one trio of Slytherins who were outright laughing at 'Bella's punishment. With an exaggerated lofty sigh and a roll of his eyes, James looked at the trio's potion.

"Oh, please. I thought Slytherins would be ambitious enough to try the more potent version of the potion. I am," he said loudly to himself.

With a snarl, the student on the end replied, "Yeah, like you'd manage it."

James turned with a smirk, and motioned to his partners, Brianna and Arthur. "We've already done it."

In a flash, the smiles vanished from the faces of the three Slytherin students. Two of them looked uncertainly at the center student, who sneered. "Fine. We'll do it. We only need to change the order and quantities of some of the ingredients and add some ginseng extract as a binding agent."

James gave him a wicked grin. "Don't forget to stir it anticlockwise instead of clockwise."

The center Slytherin looked uncertain. "You don't need to do that."

James turned back to Bri and Art, elbowing his cousins in the ribs. "Yes you do, don't you guys!" he said, his tone suspicious. "You definitely have to stir the potion *anticlockwise*, don't you?"

Arthur looked at him curiously for a second before a massive smile split his face. "Precisely, James. You must stir the more potent version of this potion anticlockwise."

Brianna looked at the pair, disgust evident on her face, and didn't answer.

The center Slytherin sneered at them. "Yeah, riiiiight," he said, and started to stir the potion clockwise.

Snape noticed and opened his mouth to yell at him to stop the instant before the potion changed colour and expanded, overflowing the cauldron and covering the desk in less than a second. The now corrosive liquid started bubbling and spitting, causing boils and burns to appear where ever it struck the three Slytherins.

~~~

"So let me get this straight," said Harry, the other teachers looking at Snape with disapproving expressions. "You are complaining that my son gave a student correct instructions to brew a potion, and when the student didn't follow the instructions, it is somehow my son's fault."

Snape thrust his large, hooked nose right up against Harry's own. "Your son used a tone that indicated he was playing a prank!"

Harry smiled sweetly, knowing it would infuriate the Potions Master. "I seem to recall an incident where Draco Malfoy told Neville Longbottom *in a tone that indicated he was playing a prank* not to add a diced oak leaf to the aging potion."

McGonagall stopped smirking and glared daggers at Snape's back.

When Snape didn't respond, Harry continued. "When Neville ignored Malfoy's instructions and his cauldron melted, I also seem to recall that you yelled at Neville for not confirming with yourself the proper method."

Snorts of amusement sounded from around the room, but when Snape spun around to glare at the offenders, not a single teacher was even smirking. Growling with frustration, Snape spun back to Harry.

"That's not the point, Potter!"

"Then what is the point, Severus?"

Unable to say anything due to his rage, Snape simply lifted up the hem of his robes, allowing all present to see his unshod, black, slightly smoking feet. Scraps of leather, now unidentifiable as coming from footwear clung to the top of Snape's feet.

~~~

Snape made a mental note to himself not to engage Arthur Weasley in a verbal sparring match unless he was thinking clearly. As furious as he was, Arthur's quick mind and passive aggressive techniques simply enraged him more, while making him out to be the bully.

The third Potter was whispering with his partners, another pair of Weasleys. Snape glanced at the map of the classroom. At least grouped as they are, there are only 4 tables of Potters and Weasleys, he thought to himself.

Snape continued his march around the stone desks as the period drew to a close. The third Potter, Remus, watched him carefully, memorizing his path around the room.

As Snape passed behind Remus, the quietest Potter started shaking, and spilled some of the vampire blood right on Snape's shoes.

"I'm sorry, professor Snape, I'm so sorry," he babbled, earning him confused looks from his cousins and scornful looks from the Slytherins.

As angry as Snape was, twenty points were deducted from Gryffindor. As the bell rang, he turned and strode away from a suddenly calm and collected Remus.

With a wicked grin, Remus tossed a handful of powdered basilisk tongue between a pair of desks. The students had all packed up and were leaving as Snape completed his usual stalking path through the desks and stepped on the powder.

~~~

The iron discipline of the Transfiguration professor finally cracked, and McGonagall burst out laughing at Snape, his scrawny white legs still on show.

Every single teacher, with the exception of the fuming Potions Master, were howling with laughter. Harry sat down in a chair, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Don't be so joyous, Potter! Or any of the rest of you. You all still have to teach them too!"

As Snape stormed out, Harry's voice could be heard over the laughter.

"They popped your clogs!" the Defense professor howled, still holding his sides.

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Snape's Worst Nightmare Gryffindor v Slytherin

The cold, brisk winter air was completely still, the gentle snowflakes falling didn't deviate at all during their slow, graceful descent. The intense flurry of snow earlier in the evening had slowed and now, early in the silent December morning, only a light dusting drifted down.

The immense, graceful castle sat silently on the slight hill. Poets in the wizarding world had time and time again attempted to describe the beauty of its reflection on the massive lake, and all had failed.

The tall graceful spires, the imperial splendor of the arched ceilings, the proud battlements, they all blended together to give an impression of honour, grace and immortal calm.

At least to someone who didn't know of the castle's recent history.

The scars of the final battle with the forces of darkness had been all but erased.

A sharp-eyed viewer from a high vantage point was able to pick out the patches of young trees in the Forbidden Forest that corresponded with the vast areas that had been devastated by fire. Enormous balls of flame that had been hurled by Death Eaters to disrupt the centaur army's path of attack. The same viewer could make out the deep pits and scars on the upper areas of the ancient castle's battlements, evidence of curses hurled at defenders hiding behind the crenellations.

Had it not been buried under three feet of snow, the viewer would easily have been able to make out the patch of ground where *the duel* took place, the very place the Dark Lord Voldemort fell, poisoning the ground. Even now, over a decade later, not even weeds grew on that cursed patch of earth.

Yes, under a thick blanket of powder snow, Hogwarts Castle looked serene and calm.

The sharp-eyed viewer flew through the crisp air on an almost two decade-old Firebolt broomstick, his dark, unruly hair whipping around. With a tight grin, he knew that the calm would not last much longer. Not with the long line of red-headed students making their way out of the castle towards the Quidditch pitch.

As the eldest of the Nightmare Dozen, Chris Weasley wielded some vague measure of authority over the rest of them. Not that it mattered when any of them decided that mischief was necessary.

With a wide grin on his cold-kissed cheeks, he turned to his twin brother Zach. As difficult to tell apart as their father and their Uncle Fred had ever been, the pair were virtually inseparable.

Without saying anything, Chris merely raised his eyebrows questioningly. Zachary nodded, tilted his head to one side as if listening, then smiled and shrugged. Chris' grin widened.

Brianna shook her head at the antics of the pair. As an only child surrounded by her cousins of twins and triplets growing up, she had been vaguely jealous of the fact that some of them could communicate vast quantities of information with each other using nothing more than a smile, grunt and a wave of their hand.

Intellectually, she knew that the ability was simply a matter of genetics, a common reference point, and an extended period of enforced company. Still, it was annoying when a silent conversation was going on all around her and she couldn't participate.

"Irritating, isn't it?"

Brianna turned to face Bill, Uncle Charlie's eldest son. "Quite. I think they do it deliberately, just to prove to others that they can."

"It doesn't help that there are only three of us who weren't part of a multiple birth."

Brianna nodded, looking over her shoulder at Heidi, the third cousin born alone. "At least you have some siblings. Mum doesn't want any more kids right now because she has her career to think about."

"Some career. I almost hurt myself laughing when I read that she moved Malfoy's lawyers to tears when he tried to get the courts to reinstate Damien's prefect status."

"Yeah. Dumbledore was particularly surprised when she turned up out of the blue to the hearing to defend McGonagall's decision to un-prefect him. Took her all of ten minutes to have the complaint dismissed. Uncle Harry told me that there had been several attempts to bring WWW to the courts over the last few years, but Mum has had every one of them tossed out. Dad says that any lawyer stupid enough to go up against her will definitely need a change of trousers before she finishes her opening brief."

"What did Aunt Hermione say to that?"

"Nothing, she just blushed. It's gross to think about, but when she wins a case, she and Dad disappear to 'celebrate' alone."

Bill made a face. "You're right, that is gross."

Someone tapped Bri on the shoulder. She jumped slightly and turned to look into twin pools of

emerald green. "Stop thinking about your parent's sex life and help us, Bri. We need the lock on the broom closet open but-"

"-looking like it hasn't been touched. I know," sighed Bri. "Look, Sirius, I-"

"Jimmy," said the young Potter with a grin.

Brianna stopped walking and gave him a level gaze. "As I was saying, *Sirius*, I know what we are doing, I help come up with the idea in the first place."

"No, really. I'm Jimmy."

Brianna sighed. "It didn't work with Snape, it certainly won't work with me."

Sirius sighed as though wounded mortally. "It hasn't worked with any of the teachers. They can all tell the difference between us perfectly. I don't know how."

"Then it's obvious Rennie got the brains in your family."

Sirius turned to face Chris and Zach. "What do you mean?"

Chris smiled. "Haven't you seen the way the teachers always look at the roll before picking out which one of us is which?"

"But we're first years." objected Sirius. "The teachers always have to look at a roll before they know everyone."

"We were also famous, well, infamous before the first class. They know who we are, but I'd bet my inheritance in WWI that Uncle Harry has charmed the parchment the roll is on to tell the teachers which of us is which."

Sirius looked pained. "Damn, Dad," he muttered to himself. "Why?"

"Why what?" asked Isabella, having caught up with the small group.

"Sorry to interrupt your scintillating conversation," said Arthur, his tone not sorry at all. "We do only have a limited amount of time to conduct tonight's mischief. I do realise that Sirius here has the attention span of a particularly retarded flobberworm, but surely the rest of you have the intellectual capacity to understand that being caught near the Quidditch pitch the night before a big game will have serious ramifications on our future freedom."

"In other words, move it."

With the exception of Sirius, who was spluttering his objections to being compared with a flobberworm, the group made their way towards their destination.

Chris, Remus and Brianna all drew their wands and aimed them at various parts of the door. For

several nervous minutes, the 'brains' of the group gently twisted and probed the warding charms on the door to the equipment shed. Normally, only the professors and prefects had the password for the door, but Brianna had noticed a loophole in the password protected locking charm, and the three now slowly stretched the ward out of the way.

"Right, you should be able to open the door," whispered Chris, perspiration running down his face and freezing on the tip of his nose.

James nodded and reached between the three wands to try the door. Without even a creak of the hinges, it swung inwards.

Chris, Remus and Brianna all let out their collective breaths.

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"Now, you all know what charm you are to use, so I want to organise you into a circle where as one charm is complete, you can pass the broom onto the next person," said Heidi, her tone taken straight from her father.

Sirius, still disgruntled at no one backing him up earlier when his attention span was insulted spoke up. "Who put you in charge?"

Arthur gently kicked him in the shins. "Sirius, as much as I admire your devious mind, your incredible imagination and your indisputable loyalty, you could not organise a one man production line should your life depend on it. Heidi however, is quite capable of ensuring these brooms are properly charmed, the door is properly locked, the footprints in the snow are properly concealed and if necessary, that Hogwarts castle is completely disassembled and rebuilt three feet to the left by morning."

Heidi blushed at the unexpected praise. "Thank you, Arthur."

Arthur nodded. "No problem," He turned back to Sirius. "Now, grab a broom, grab some floor and do your work."

Sirius sneered, the twitching of his lips the only give away that he wasn't serious. "Or?"

Arthur shrugged. "Or I shall taunt you a second time," he replied in a silly French accent.

The pair snorted with repressed laughter, only to be hushed by the others. Sirius and Arthur sat down side by side and began working.

After a while, Sirius leaned over and whispered in Arthur's ear, "Now you've got me thinking, and I can't remember, is it my mother or father that smells of elderberries?"

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The bitterly cold December night had faded to a brisk winter morning. The pennants depicting the

Gryffindor lion and the Slytherin serpent snapped and waved in the breeze. Over a thousand students, teachers and Hogsmeade townsfolk braved the sub-zero temperatures to turn out for the most highly anticipated game of the year.

Margaret Potter sat in her mother's lap and wordlessly flapped her arms like a bird, the scarlet and gold Gryffindor flag held in one hand roaring with each wave. The three year old girl seemed far more interested in the gift her Uncle Fred had given her than the impending game itself.

Ginny smiled and kissed the top of her daughter's head. On her left, Lily scanned the still growing crowd, desperately looking for a sign of any of her three brothers. A pair of Hufflepuff witches went to sit down in the large empty space in front of them.

Lily spoke up. "Excuse me. Those seats are saved for my brothers and cousins."

The pair looked at her blankly, then with a flash of recognition smiled at her. "You must be Lily," said one of them. "You poor girl." The pair slowly made their way to other seats.

Lily grinned to herself. Her brothers had tried to torment her all her life, but according to her father she had her mother's temper, and her grandmother's vocal range.

"I can't see them, Mum. Where are they?" she asked nervously.

Ginny snickered and took her hand. "Probably bargaining their way out of a detention so they can come down and see the game."

Lily rolled her eyes but didn't argue. From what her father had told her over the last few months, her brothers had gotten into more trouble than Uncle Fred and Uncle George ever did.

"I always knew you had the Sight."

Ginny and Lily turned to face the newcomer. With a yell, Lily jumped out of her seat and threw her arms around her father's neck. "Daddy!" she squealed.

Harry closed his eyes, savouring the sensation of hugging his exuberant daughter. "If you squeal a little louder, I'm sure my eardrums will burst," he teased.

Lily giggled, but squeezed her father tighter. "I missed you, Daddy."

Harry leaned back so he could look into his daughter's hazel eyes. "I floored home and tucked you into bed last night!" he objected.

Lily gave him a wicked grin. "I know, but I'm allowed to miss my Daddy."

Harry smiled and kissed her on the forehead. "I love you, princess."

Lily gave her father a big smile at this, and took his hand, skillfully maneuvering him so he sat between his wife and daughter.

Ginny leaned over and kissed him. "I told you when she was born that she'd wrap you around her finger."

Harry smiled and lowered his head to kiss the side of Ginny's neck. "I know," he whispered in her ear. "But I don't care."

Ginny giggled at his warm breath tickling her skin. "What were you saying about me having the Sight?"

Harry grinned. "Twelve first-year students are as we speak, busily scrubbing every toilet in the castle. If they finish to Filch's satisfaction, they will be allowed to come down to watch the game."

Ginny's eyes widened, but Lily just laughed. "What did they do this time?" the girls asked together.

Harry laughed out loud at his family's dual question. "I caught them at three o'clock this morning coming back to Gryffindor Tower."

Ginny's eyes narrowed dangerously. "What in Merlin's name were they doing out at that time?"

Harry shrugged unconcerned. "I didn't think to ask them."

"Harry?" Ginny said, her voice low and drawn out.

Harry turned and gave her 'that' smile; the one he knew made her knees go weak. "I took care of it, my love. Don't worry, they all seemed particularly eager to see today's match. They'll be here."

Ginny sighed and leaned her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes in contentment as his arm slipped around her own shoulder. Only the loud roaring of her youngest daughter's flag kept her from complete relaxation.

"What's that you've got there, Maggie?" Harry asked.

Margaret just blinked and stared at her father. She held out the flag and said, "Present."

Harry's eyebrows shot up. "Who gave you the present, Maggie? Who would risk your mother's wrath like that?"

Margaret bit her lip. "Uncle Gred and Uncle Forge."

Harry smiled as Ginny rolled her eyes at the twin's attempts to corrupt her daughter. "I see. Do you have a kiss for Daddy?"

With a big smile, Margaret nodded and kissed Harry's cheek as he leaned in. "Thank you, Maggie. I really needed that."

Margaret nodded to herself, happy that she had helped her father. She turned back to the empty

field and again began waving the flag, emitting more roars.

"You know, Maggie, if you wave it in a circle, it makes a different sound." Harry told her.

With a small frown, clearly indicating that her father knew nothing about how important it was to make as much noise as possible, Margaret started waving the flag in a circle. Immediately, the flag started building up the chant.

"Grrrrrrrrrrrrryfffffffinnnnnndooooooooooooooooorrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!"

With a squeal of excitement, Margaret explored this new facet of her gift. Ginny sighed and looked up at her husband. "Why did you tell her that?"

Harry smiled and drew out a few pairs of tiny foam objects. "Put one of these in each of your ears," he said.

With a frown, Ginny waited until Harry had placed a couple in his own ears before inserting her own. Harry finally gave the last pair to Lily.

Instantly, Margaret's flag became almost silent. Harry smiled at his wife. "Testing plugs," he explained. "Fred and George are developing several loud products, and these need to be tested themselves. Hermione's office is in their main headquarters, and with all the noise from the testing she was on the verge of hexing them all the way round the world until they developed these. Any Wheeze that makes noise is all but filtered out. You can hear normally, but all the bangs, howls and yells of the products don't get through."

Ginny's relief was evident. "Have I ever told you I love you?"

Harry smiled. "Not in the last few hours."

"I love you. So, how many of these exist?"

"Not many, only about six pairs. And they are not for sale. The twins would be so upset if they became general issue. All their hard work would be down the drain."

With a calculating smile, Ginny placed a hand on Harry's chin and gently turned his head to face her. "I expect that a single pair of these would be worth quite a bit." She kissed him.

Harry returned the kiss. "I expect you could probably buy several professional Quidditch teams from the proceeds of that single sale. Especially if you sold them to one of the teachers here."

Suddenly, a loud voice covered the field and stands. **"Witches and Wizards, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome one and all to the latest installment of the most intense rivalry Quidditch has ever seen. "**

With the start of the commentary, the roar from the crowd drowned out all the conversations going on. Harry smiled to himself, and placed his free arm around Lily's shoulders.

"Compared to today's teams, the Wasps and the Cannons get along like best friends. Compare their history with England and Scotland, and the wars between the two countries don't seem to be too bad. Even when Australian and New Zealand sporting teams play each other, they don't actively try to kill their opposition. None of them even come close to the tensions between the Gryffindor and Slytherin Quidditch teams, nobility verses cunning, courage verses ambition, good verses evil- "

The roaring crowd covered the commentary being suddenly cut off by the deputy headmistress. Harry could make out the stern professor trying to wrestle the enchanted megaphone from the resident commentator, Ravenclaw Miles Sommerville. The parts of the crowd waving green were booing, the rest were cheering. Harry turned to his left and watched his daughter yell and wave her fist at the Slytherin section of the crowd.

"Yet another Quidditch hooligan in the making," he whispered in his wife's ear. Ginny grinned and nodded, her head returning to his shoulder.

Sommerville managed to keep control of the megaphone. **"Anyway, would you please welcome the team members for Gryffindor, led out by their Captain and Keeper. Wood, MacDonald, Turpin, White, Jordan, MacKinley aaaaaaannnnnnnd Richards! "**

Seven scarlet and gold blurs flashed onto the field in perfect formation, performing some incredible aerial maneuvers. They peeled off to the edge of the field and did a lap of the pitch, flying so close to the spectators that the wind of their passing knocked hats off some of the crowd.

"Now, please give a warm welcome, luke warm that is- " sounds of a struggle could be heard from the commentary box as the Slytherin section of the crowd roared their disapproval. **"-for the Slytherin gits- "** another struggle, another roar. **"I mean team, the Slytherin team! Led out by their Captain and Chaser. Flint, O'Mally, Smithson, d'Aldral, Travis, Travis aaaaaaannnnnnnd Warrick! "**

The seven Slytherin players soared out onto the pitch, though without the team discipline of the Gryffindor players. Even with the testing plugs filtering out all the Wheeze products in the crowd, Harry was nearly deafened by the roar of the crowd. With a tight grin, Harry turned to shout into his wife's ear, "Notice that just about everyone not wearing green is making a rather rude gesture?"

Ginny smiled and nodded.

The players finally landed and congregated at the centre of the pitch. Madam Hooch met them and started reading them the riot act. Harry chuckled to himself, remembering the number of times he had to listen to it as a player.

As Madam Hooch waved her finger under the nose of the Slytherin captain, twelve disheveled, dirty, exhausted first-years could be seen making their way up the stairs of the stadium. Harry nudged Lily and pointed out her three brothers.

With a shout, Lily jumped up and ran along the empty row in front of her parents and flew into the arms of her brothers. Startled at her appearance, James and Sirius simply let her hug them, but Remus returned his sister's hug with feeling.

Lily took Remus and Arthur by hand and led them to the space she had been saving for them.

Shouts of "Wicked!" and "Wow, cool seats!" could be heard from her appreciative cousins. Lily basked in the warm words before climbing over the empty seats and sitting back next to her father.

Ginny picked Margaret up off her lap and transferred her to her father. She then leaned forward and grabbed James' left and Sirius' right ears. "Just what were you all doing out at three in the morning?"

James and Sirius wore identical, if mirrored, pained expressions as they each had one ear pulled painfully. "Hey! We've already been punished for that!" James objected.

"By your father perhaps, not yet by me!" she growled. "Now spill! What were you doing out of bed?"

Harry leaned over and firmly but gently prized Ginny's vengeful fingers away from his sons' ears. "Gin, Love, as they said, I've already punished them for being out late."

"You didn't even try to find out what they had been doing!" she hissed.

Harry just smiled and handed back Margaret. "I'm sure what they were doing will eventually become apparent. In fact I'm positive."

Ginny felt her anger leave. Her eyes narrowed. "You already know," she mouthed.

Harry nodded. "As a matter of fact," he continued out loud, "I'm sure we will find out exactly what they were doing out of their dorm once the game is underway."

Only someone specifically looking would have noticed the immediate stiffening of twelve students in the row in front of Harry. The sudden intake of breath by each of the Nightmare Dozen was drowned out by the roar as Madam Hooch blew her whistle signaling the start of the game. More obvious was the number of furtive looks they each gave one another.

"White has the Quaffle as the Gryffindor chasers assume a perfect three point diamond formation. Travis sends a bludger to try to break it up, but- NO! What's this? Slytherin Seeker Warrick has tried to piggyback on Chaser Turpin's broom, but now appears to be having trouble controlling his broom. O'Mally is distracted, White passes to MacDonald, she shoots, she scores! Gryffindor open the scoring! "

Madam Hooch's whistle could be heard calling the foul on Turpin. The Slytherin Seeker was obviously uncomfortable on his broom, going to the extent of grabbing the handle with both hands, crossing his ankles on the handle behind him and lifting his haunch from the seat.

Flint signaled time-out, and the Slytherin players landed.

Ginny frowned. "What's going on?"

Harry shrugged. "Oh, I'd say that when Warrick tried to commit that foul, the comfort charm on his broom was temporarily negated."

Sirius, Charlie and Arthur, who had been taking the opportunity to have a drink, all coughed and spluttered in unison. Arthur scrabbled for a handkerchief to wipe up the pumpkin juice he had coughed through his nose at Harry's comment.

Ginny didn't notice. "That's ridiculous! What on Earth makes you say that?"

Harry grinned at her. "My outstanding talent for Divination."

Ginny rolled her eyes, but noticed the increasingly nervous looks her sons were exchanging with her nieces and nephews. A slow grin appeared on her face. "You know, you could be right."

"It's possible," said Harry, as the game started again.

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**"Well folks, it has been a fascinating game so far, with the score poised at 170 to 10 to Gryffindor. We are used to games where poor sportsmanship causes the match to stop and start again, but that is usually because of the fouls called by the referee. Not because the brooms are cursed. White lines up to take another penalty, he feints, shoots, SCORES! 180 to 10 Gryffindor! "**

Harry could make out Professor Snape arguing with Madam Hooch on the pitch. Harry grinned to himself and stood. "I'd better go down there, before Severus has an aneurism."

Ginny nodded and watched him leave. She turned back to her sons in front of her. "Right, whose idea was it to put a swelling charm on the broom to activate when the player tries to ram another?" she whispered in James' ear.

"Why are you asking me?" James asked innocently.

Ginny raised her eyebrows. "Because of the way you reacted when your father said that d'Aldral was sitting on two balloons."

James looked at her nervously. "Are you angry?"

Ginny's lips twitched. "No. Surprised, yes. Proud, yes, a bit. But not angry."

Sirius turned around to face his mother. "I thought you'd be furious."

Ginny smiled. "Let's just say that if my idiot brothers didn't think this one up while they were

here, and you lot managed to pull it off in your first year, then I have all the teasing material I need for the next decade." she whispered.

The crowd leapt to its feet as Richards wrapped her fingers around the snitch.

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Even after the infamous 'popping clogs' incident, Harry had never seen Snape more livid. The Potions Master's face was a deep purple, with veins standing out from his forehead and neck. Knowing that his presence would be most unwanted, Harry sauntered up to his as Snape continued to lambaste Madam Hooch.

"I WANT THE GAME REPLAYED!" Snape shouted at her, his face less than two inches from her own. "THE BROOMS HAD BEEN TAMPERED WITH!"

Harry cleared his throat. "I don't recall any rule in Quidditch that states that a game needs to be replayed if a player's equipment has been tampered with. You didn't make such a big deal after my broom had been hexed by Quirrell."

Snape spun round to face him. Harry was only mildly surprised to see the amount of foam collected at the corners of his mouth. "THIS DOES NOT CONCERN YOU!"

Harry shrugged. "I disagree. Any time an object has been charmed to cause harm to another student, the Defense instructor has an obligation to investigate." Harry held up two brooms, one in each hand. "These are the two brooms used by the Seekers today."

Dumbledore and McGonagall silently arrived as Snape paused his hysterics, if only to catch his breath, letting his colouring slowly return to normal. "So?" he snarled.

"I examined Warrick's first. Turns out that there are in fact several triggered charms placed on it. Swelling charm if the rider tries to ram another player. Temporary negation of the flight charms if the rider tries to physically assault another player. That sort of thing."

"What caused Flint's broom to shrink?" demanded Snape.

Harry grinned, knowing it would irritate his colleague. "When he spat into MacDonald's face, that particular charm was activated."

"And when Smithson became ninety years old?"

"Aging potion coated on the handle activated when she shoved her own player into MacKinley."

Snape snarled. "And Travis being covered in oil so he couldn't hold his bat?"

"Actually, I believe the oil just covered his hands, so he dropped his wand after sending a hex at Wood to distract him from the shot Flint made. Dropping his beaters bat was an unintended side effect."

"Just what do you intend to do about this?" Snape demanded.

"I'm not sure what you expect me to do? It was a level playing field after all."

Snape's colouring returned to purple. "WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? IT WAS MY TEAM THAT HAD CURSED EQUIPMENT!"

Harry nodded at Madam Hooch. "Actually, they weren't. As I was saying, these two brooms were the ones used by the seekers in the game. They are both Firebolt Mach IIs. Both six years old. From the registration numbers, they were both from the same batch."

"So?"

"They are both cursed."

Madam Hooch finally got a word in. "Both?" she asked.

Harry nodded. "Whoever did this, did it to all the brooms used in the game. Any time a player tried to break the rules, the charms on the broom would activate and immediately punish the player."

Dumbledore and McGonagall looked intrigued. Madam Hooch looked delighted while Snape looked livid.

Again, Madam Hooch spoke up. "Are you saying that the brooms have been charmed to ensure fair play? That no matter which player it is, the one who causes the foul will be 'punished'?"

Harry nodded. "It is quite amazing. The layering of the charms is quite skillfully done."

Snape interrupted. "I don't care if it is the work of a genius! When will the rematch take place?"

Drawing herself to her full height, Madam Hooch addressed the Potions Master. "Professor Snape. Each and every player today were suffering the same restrictions on their game play. I see no reason to declare this match null and void."

As Snape started sputtering his objection, she continued. "As a matter of fact, I believe I will petition the headmaster to play all future matches under these conditions. It will promote better game play, and get some players used to following the rules of the game."

Snape was the only person who didn't have a benign expression on his face.

--

Snape's Worst Nightmare A Valentine's Day to Remember

"Poor Sirius," said Brianna, her pretty face plainly showing her sympathy.

James nodded, looking over at his normally mischievous younger brother. Sirius sat on his own in the far corner of the Gryffindor common room, arms crossed, his face darker than a thundercloud. "I've never seen him like this before."

"Has a girl he liked ever done this to him?"

James laughed. "All the time. Sirius doesn't know how to behave around a girl he likes, so he just annoys her. Once she gets angry enough to tell him to go away, he just shrugs and starts annoying the next girl."

Brianna laughed, a merry sound that caused not a few of the older students to look around at her to see what was so funny. Most looked at her with curiosity and amusement, though the fifth and seventh year students gave her dark looks.

Arthur closed his Charms textbook with a satisfied sigh, stood up and came over to sit down next to his cousins. "Bri, unless you want to be hexed into next week, I'd keep it quiet around the students studying for their OWLs and NEWTs."

Immediately, Bri sobered and mouthed apologies to those studying for their important exams. One by one, they returned their attention to their work, though not a few of them twirled their wands in their fingers as a silent warning. Bri slouched down in her chair, red-faced.

"That colour really suits you, Bri," smirked Arthur.

Brianna poked her tongue out at him.

Chris Weasley appeared behind the group and tapped James on the shoulder, silently indicating that they should look at a scene playing out in a different corner of the common room.

Isabella Weasley was holding court, at least that was what Brianna called it.

Isabella simply sat quietly, doing her homework, unconsciously exuding her Veela charm. Normally, several student wizards would just seem to gravitate towards her, clumsily trying to gain her attention. The only thing funnier to the Nightmare Dozen than the convoluted showing off

by those trying to attract 'Bella's attention, was 'Bella's complete and utter disinterest in them.

Now, a sixth year student named Miles Balthazar leaned over her, his right palm flat above her head on the wall behind her. Desperately trying to bedazzle the young witch with wit and banter, he was completely unaware of the massive first year student silently stalking up behind him.

James, Chris, Brianna and Arthur all snorted with repressed laughter as the older student frowned and turned around, no doubt wondering why the lights had been dimmed. His nose almost touched Charlie Weasley's large chest, and it became apparent from Miles' expression that he knew it wasn't the dimming of the lights that caused the sudden darkness. With a deepening expression of horror, Miles slowly looked up, until he was staring straight into the crystal blue eyes of Isabella's particularly protective brother. Several people watching burst out laughing as 'Bella's prospective boyfriend yelped in fright and dove for cover.

At least three separate hexes from the frantic fifth and seventh year students hit Miles, causing him to simultaneously dance, sprout horns and be surrounded in a malleable, iridescent bubble of silence.

Even Sirius cracked a smile at the commotion.

Charlie didn't even bother to glance in Miles' direction, he simply sat down quietly next to his sister. She looked up at him, then wordlessly shifted over a little to allow her large brother's legs to fit under the table. In seconds, they were silently studying for their upcoming Charm's presentation.

With a sigh, Sirius stood and walked over to join his cousins on the armchairs and couches. He plopped down with no grace next to Arthur. "How many does that make?"

Arthur shrugged. "I stopped counting at fifteen. I suppose around twenty, maybe twenty-two."

Brianna cocked an eyebrow. "Twenty-two what?"

Arthur rolled his eyes. "Boys that Chuckles there has scared away from 'Bella," he said. Looking over at Uncle Bill's children he added, "Do you reckon that he'll ever stop growing?"

Brianna also looked over at Isabella and Charlie, now sitting together as if they had never been apart. As physically different as any two people could possibly be, they never the less always looked out for each other with a dedication that made the other Weasley twins look like normal siblings. Even the Potter triplets occasionally got angry with one another, but Bill's children had never fought a day in their lives.

"I don't know. He's over six and a half feet now, and he only just turned twelve," replied Brianna. "If he keeps going he'll be able to intimidate Hagrid soon."

Arthur cracked a smile. "Which Hagrid? Rubeus, Olympé or Melgwyn?" he asked, looking over his shoulder to ensure that Melgwyn, the enormous second-year son of Rubeus and Olympé

Hagrid wasn't within earshot.

Brianna shrugged. "I meant Rubeus, but any of them will do."

James turned to Sirius. "So, who turned you down now?"

Sirius snarled. "She didn't. Her brother and his friends did."

The others looked at Sirius in surprise. "What happened?"

Sirius took a deep breath. "Kate and I were just talking, she is a big Cannon's fan by the way, when her brother and his friends came up behind us. They hung me upside down for a while, then stripped my robes off and locked me in the girl's toilet."

James looked at his brother carefully. "That's not all, is it?"

Sirius shook his head, blushing furiously.

James and Arthur exchanged looks. "Her surname's Brulingstone isn't it? She's a Hufflepuff, isn't she?" asked James.

Brianna nodded. "We have Herbology with her."

Arthur grinned a particularly vicious smile. "Her brothers and his friends are in Slytherin though..."

Chris smiled too. "I think we'd better recruit 'Bella on this one."

~~~

The last of the intense OWLers finally closed their books and headed off to bed in the early hours of the morning. Sirius raised his bleary head, blinking away the sleep in his emerald eyes as the last of them finally entered their dorm. Noting that all was clear, he withdrew two hand-mirrors from his robes and tapped the edges of both with his wand. "All clear," he whispered into the mirrors, his almost irrepressible grin back in place.

Moments later, eleven first-year students made their way down into the scarlet and gold common room. Remus and Brianna stoked the fire, and soon the room filled with warmth.

"Right." started Chris. "You heard what happened to Sirius today. We now have an obligation to get back at seven Slytherin gits."

"What does that have to do with me?" asked Isabella.

"You honestly haven't noticed what has happened around you, have you?" smirked Brianna.

Isabella rolled her eyes. "If you mean those silly gits who can't concentrate around me, then..."

yes..." she said, her eyes lighting up with realisation.

Charlie looked livid. "You're not going to use my sister as bait!" he snarled.

Isabella smiled and put her hand on her brother's arm. "It's OK, I think I know what they have in mind."

Heidi spoke up. "If you are going to try and get 'Bella to woo those idiots, then you'll need to time it properly. If they talk to one another about being approached by her..."

Isabella waved Heidi's concern away. "If I tell them not to tell anyone, they won't."

"I didn't think your Veela charms were that sensitive," said William, his brow furrowed.

Isabella gave him a big smile. "They're not," she said. She turned and looked up at her brother. Her extremely large, protective brother. "I think I have another thing I can threaten them with to ensure their silence."

Charlie looked both flattered and uncomfortable. "I don't know, 'Bella. You might get a reputation."

Chris shook his head. "Once the story of this prank gets around, no one bar the Gryffindors will be brave enough to talk to her for years," he said with a smile. "It will be easy for you to keep an eye on her then."

Both Charlie and Isabella looked happier at that thought.

Heidi shook her head again. "That still doesn't get around the fact that 'Bella needs to approach these idiots individually. How can we be sure they are alone, and not being eavesdropped upon?"

Eleven heads drooped at that. Even Remus and Brianna were frowning in thought, trying to come up with a foolproof way of isolating seven separate students. James looked around at them, a superior grin on his features. "Well guys," he said to them. "It just so happens that I accidentally found myself accidentally going through my Dad's old school things. Accidentally, of course," he finished, drawing a old, tatty, crumpled piece of parchment from his robes.

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The day before Valentine's day dawned clear, but cold. Students were rugged up in thick, heavy clothes as they ventured down for breakfast. Row upon row of students breathed fog in the cold hall.

Hot food and drinks were the order of the day, several younger students who had never drank coffee before experiencing their first caffeine rush. Several of the older students were watching with amusement, the teachers with discontent. It would be difficult to control them today.

With a fluttering rush, the morning mail was delivered. Owl after owl entered the Great Hall and

dumped letters, packages and notes in front of the intended recipients. James, Chris and Isabella sat at the end of the table, closest to the door to the Great Hall. The trio huddled around the Marauder's Map, intently studying the clumps of students walking towards the Hall for breakfast.

~~~

Ignates Brulingstone and his six ever-present Slytherin friends glared at a pair of first-year Hufflepuff witches, scaring them out of their way. Chuckling to themselves at the way they managed to frighten two witches half their own weight, they made their way down to the Great Hall for breakfast. The enormous doors swung open, and the beautiful Gryffindor part-Veela witch stepped out, looking simply divine.

Ignates held the door open for his friends, just to get a longer look at her slim figure as she literally floated with grace down the hall. Just as he was about to enter, she half turned, and beckoned to him.

The Slytherin frowned, looking around to discover to whom the beautiful girl was signaling. No one else was in the hall.

He turned back to find her still looking at him. Dumbly, he pointed to himself.

Isabella nodded, and smoothly stepped around a corner.

Ignates swallowed, straightened his tie, and followed.

As soon as he rounded the corner, slim hands grabbed his lapels and dragged him close. With the sudden realisation that his body was pressed against the most desirable witch in the entire school, his heart started thumping in his chest, fast and loud.

He opened his mouth to say something, only to have her warm fingers cover his lips.

"Shhh," she whispered softly, sending shivers of delight down Ignates' spine. "I don't want my brother to find us," Isabella slowly traced the backs of her fingers down Ignate's chest.

The thought of her large, protective brother dampened his enthusiasm somewhat, but he nodded his accent.

"Good. Please, will you be my Valentine?" she pouted.

Unable to form a coherent sentence, Ignates just nodded dumbly.

"Oh, wonderful! Thank you!" Isabella whispered, bouncing on the balls of her feet in excitement. "But please, don't tell anyone!" she pleaded, pressing herself against him. "I mean anyone! If anyone overheard you telling someone and my brother found out, well..."

Ignates nodded again. "Our safe is secret with me," he said enthusiastically.



"Thank you," she whispered. Isabella again slowly ran her hand up and then down the front of Ignates chest, down to his waist. "Will you show me what it means to be a woman?" she asked huskily.

It took all of Isabella's self control not to laugh at how far the bully's eyes bulged in his sockets.

Isabella stood on tiptoes and leant forward. "Meet me in Hagrid's old hut on the edge of the forest, nine pm, on Valentine's day. I'll be waiting," she purred in his ear as she quickly slipped round the corner.

It was several minutes before Ignates trusted himself to speak. He went to breakfast imagining forbidden delights.

~~~

"Well?"

James let out the deep breath he discovered he was holding. "Merlin, 'Bella! Where did you learn to do that to a boy?"

Isabella giggled. "Mum does it to Dad all the time. Usually just before he has to go to work. I just learned from her, since she is the master. When she first arrived at Hogwarts for the Tri-wizard Tournament, she had Uncle Ron just about eating out of her hand, but Daddy managed to resist her charms enough to make her very interested in him." Isabella shook her head at the imagined scene. "She loves Daddy so much, but she does love to tease him."

Chris shook his head. "Is Kyrié as bad as you?"

Isabella raised one perfect eyebrow. "Don't you mean, as good as me?" she asked archly.

James chuckled aloud and hugged his part-Veela cousin. "Isabella, you are incredible."

She giggled, and hugged James back. "I know. Now, who's next?"

~~~

For the rest of the day, several Slytherin students were stalked throughout the castle, skillfully isolated, then ambushed with Isabella's unearthly charms. Every one of them fell to her attack.

The Gryffindors were almost undone when a particularly unwelcome professor came across their group eavesdropping on Isabella's latest victim.

Luckily, Arthur had glanced at the Marauder's Map in time to note that the unwelcome dot belonging to Professor Snape was approaching the group from behind. Arthur leapt to his feet and whipped out his notebook.

"Ahh, such a large gathering of Weasleys and Potters," Snape sneered. "Just what requires you all

to gather around in such a tight group?"

"I wasn't aware that gathering in a tight group was against the rules, sir," deadpanned Arthur.

Snape narrowed his eyes and tilted his head back. "Failing to answer to a teacher is against the rules, Weasley. What are you doing?" Snape demanded.

Arthur smiled. "Gambling, sir."

Snape's involuntary gasp of surprise covered the rest of the Nightmare Dozen's own. "Gambling?" Snape repeated.

"Yes, sir. I'm running a book," supplied Arthur, ignoring the confused looks from his cousins.

"Five points from Gryffindor," said Snape, a self-satisfied smile playing on his lips.

Arthur looked down at his notebook. "Um, let's see. Let's see. Here we go... Alex!" Arthur exclaimed, his brother jumping slightly. "Alex wins the first pot."

Snape frowned at this most unexpected response. "What?" he snapped.

Arthur looked up at him innocently. "Alex placed his bet on five points being deducted by you, even though no rule had been broken."

Snape coloured remarkably quickly. "You are placing bets on me?" he demanded incredulously.

Arthur nodded. "You'd be amazed at the sheer variety of responses everyone believes you will come up with. Admittedly, none of them involve anything benign, like cracking a joke or walking away and leaving students to their own devices. No, they all appear to have something to do with you making sure a student has a bad day."

"Detention, Weasley," Snape snapped.

Chris jumped up and down. "I got the second pot!" he shouted.

Snape's face darkened. "You what?" he spat.

Chris smiled widely, knowing it would irritate Snape even more. "I bet on the fact that you'd give him a detention. I was lucky enough to get first pick."

Arthur nodded sagely. "Everyone wanted that one."

Snape was making strangling noises in the back of his throat. He spun on his heel and stormed off, his black cloak billowing out behind him.

The last words he heard from Arthur was, "Right, no one got the third pot, no one picked he'd walk away. For the fourth pot though, who bet on 'puce' as the colour his face would turn when he found

out what we were doing?"

~~~

The seven Slytherins came down to Hagrid's hut at five minute intervals. It took some timing, but Isabella managed to convince each to hide in a different part of the hut from her brother, who was prowling around outside.

Judicious use of silencing spells kept each of the Slytherin housemates ignorant of the others, right up until they were all dispelled, and each heard the voice they had been desperately waiting for.

"I'm yours!" came Isabella's honey-smooth voice to each of their hiding places. "Take me!"

~~~

The non-prefect Gryffindor students with cameras, omnocolors and the like were all told in advance to gather near the castle exit closest to Hagrid's old hut. Shrugging to themselves at the odd request, they burst into laughter at the sight of seven naked, petrified wizards running flat out towards the castle from Hagrid's hut, all cupping their family jewels.

Immediately the photographers fanned out, snapping picture after picture. Ignates, in the lead, was the first to notice the group ahead. He quickly turned to run in a new direction. The others followed.

For almost a quarter of an hour, seven pale pairs of pimple covered buttocks were repeatedly photographed and recorded as Isabella's prospective Valentines tried to reach an empty castle entrance. Large groups of students would fill any exit the naked Slytherins got close to, forcing them to run in a different direction to find another entrance. From the doorway of Hagrid's old hut, Isabella, Charlie and Sirius sat on the step laughing so hard that tears ran unheeded down their cheeks.

The rest of the Nightmare Dozen, with the exception of Heidi, ran amongst the mortified Slytherins, snapping photo after photo. Heidi stood in the doorway of the main entrance, the Map in one hand. Shouts of, "They're going for the west entrance!" from her were enough to ensure that the entertainment continued for a long time.

As expected, the commotion drew the attention of some students from other houses. Almost like a dam bursting, close to a hundred newcomers joined in the fun of taunting the seven naked bullies. Students in the higher years were able to cast spells to summon their own camera and omnocolors from their common rooms to assist in recording the night for prosperity.

Finally, the noise caught the attention of some prefects who, after taking some time to laugh themselves sick, tried to contain the situation. They would have been more authoritative had they been able to stop laughing just as hard as the other students. Not long after their arrival, Professor Flitwick appeared on the scene.

After having a chuckle himself, the diminutive professor raised his wand and summoned the naked students, covered them in a shroud of darkness to preserve what ever dignity they retained. The bullies scurried off to the Slytherin common room to clothe themselves.

As more and more teachers arrived on the scene, twelve first year Gryffindor students quietly made their way to Gryffindor Tower, avoiding the crowds.

~~~

An hour later, Isabella Weasley sat nervously in the dank dungeon office belonging to Hogwart's Potion Master. She swallowed in an effort to move the stubborn lump in her throat, and looked up at the livid features of Professor Snape.

He had been staring at her for almost a full minute, waiting for the silent girl to answer him.

"Answer me!" snapped the oily teacher.

Isabella looked down at her clasped hands, and kept her mouth closed.

Snape leapt to his feet and slammed his palms down on his marble desk, causing Isabella to jump in alarm. "Do you wish to be expelled?" Snape shouted.

Isabella's glorious eyes widened in fright, but she remained silent.

Both of the room's occupants jumped at the sudden explosion that reduced the ancient oaken door into tiny pieces of kindling, each sliver smashing with excessive force against the even older stone walls opposite the entrance. Half of Isabella wanted to laugh at seeing Snape leap half a foot into the air in fright, while the other half wanted to burst into relieved tears on seeing her formidable uncle storm through the now permanently open portal to Snape's realm.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" Harry demanded as he stormed around Snape's marble desk to stand next to Isabella's chair, his emerald-green eyes almost glowing with anger in the dim light.

Snape quickly recovered his composure. With a sneer he said, "Nothing that concerns you, Potter. If you wish to do something helpful, for a change, go and inform Minerva that there will be one less student inhabiting Gryffindor Tower tomorrow."

Professor Snape was completely surprised when the Defense Professor reached out over the desk, grabbed him by the front of his robes and hauled him bodily across the flat marble surface. Snape ended up lying on the desk, his hawk-like nose ending up tip-to-tip with Harry's own.

"You haven't changed at all have you?" Harry spat. "Even after everything that has happened, you still hold Gryffindor House responsible for all the slights and insults you suffered as a child."

The fear in Snape's eyes gave way to anger. "I'm not the only one that hasn't changed, Potter! It seems that you also cannot see past the chip on your shoulder." Snape slowly drew his wand from

inside his robes.

Harry's eyes didn't leave Snape's own. Letting go of Snape with one hand Harry, with a single swipe, batted Snape's wand, sending it flying. With only one hand, he pulled Snape across the desk and pushed him up against a wall.

"You complete idiot! You think I'm here because she is a Gryffindor? That the others were in Slytherin?" he snarled. "I'm here to make sure you still have a job tomorrow!"

Snape swallowed painfully, Harry's fist pressing hard into his chest. "What are you talking about?" he wheezed.

Harry let Snape go, watching as he fell in an undignified heap on the floor. "Hypothetical question, a first year Slytherin witch is found with seven naked upper-class Gryffindor wizards. Who do you want expelled?"

Snape snarled at Harry silently.

"Exactly," said Harry. "Now, tell me what the Governors would say if you suggested the first year was to be expelled."

With as much dignity as a man who had just been hauled around the room could muster, Snape stood, swaying slightly, but remaining silent.

Harry nodded. "It was a prank. Let it go. If you punish anyone but your own students, questions will be asked, and you won't like the answers."

Without waiting for an answer, Harry turned and put his arm around Isabella's shoulders. Quietly, the pair left the once immaculate, but now chaotic, office.

Snape watched the pair leave. Running the conversation through his mind again, he groaned out loud. Once more, he owed a Potter. This time, he owed his dignity.

Nothing horrified the Potion Master more than the idea of being in a Potter's debt.

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Once out of Snape's office, Isabella grabbed a handful of Harry's robes and buried her face in them, crying softly. Harry sighed, and placed his arms around her. Holding his sobbing niece close, he grasped the phoenix pendant he wore and whispered, "Sanctuary."

The portkey tugged both of them into Harry's office.

Harry skillfully maneuvered his niece into one of the comfortable armchairs. Without letting go of her hands, he withdrew his wand and charmed a tea set to pour a couple of cups of mint tea. Ready in seconds, Harry passed one to Isabella.

"Here, have a cup of tea. It will help calm you down," he whispered.

Isabella gratefully accepted the cup. The pair sat in silence for a few minutes as Isabella composed herself. Finally she looked up. "Thank you, Uncle Harry."

Harry smiled at her. "Perhaps I should thank you. It has always been an ambition of mine to throw Professor Snape around."

Isabella blushed, and finished her tea. "When I got the message that he wanted to speak to me, I was so frightened."

Harry nodded. "You probably should have expected it."

"I guess."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Isabella shrugged. "I don't know. You might be angry."

"Why would I be angry with you?"

Isabella shook her head. "Not at me. At the people we played the prank on."

Harry raised an eyebrow. "You mean after what they did to Sirius?"

Isabella's mouth dropped open. "You know?"

Harry smiled. "All through my time here, I was constantly amazed at the headmaster's ability to know what was going on. He never seemed to be surprised, and always had another method of discovering information."

Isabella bit her lower lip. "He told you how to find stuff out?"

Harry shook his head. "I simply opened my eyes," he said enigmatically. "Now, as much as I was furious with Brulingstone and his friends, I wanted to see how Sirius would handle himself and the situation. It pleased me to see that you all pitched in to help him."

"So, we're not in trouble?"

Harry shook his head. "No, but I did want to talk with you. Believe me when I say that I know the unrelenting attention of others is annoying. But you have an innate ability that others lack. One that can encourage others to do your bidding."

Isabella frowned. "But I'd never..."

Harry reached out and took her hand. "I know. But you will be tempted in the future. I just want to make sure you to know that playing with the feelings of others can seem funny, but that same

ability could be used for dark purposes."

Isabella nodded. "But you know I'd never do such a thing."

Harry sighed. "I know you'd never deliberately use your abilities for dark purposes. But other people can and will try to manipulate you into doing things you wouldn't normally."

Isabella nodded again. It seemed the safest thing to do. Silently the pair finished their tea. They finished and shared another hug, before leaving Harry's office.

"Goodnight, 'Bella," said Harry as he led her to Gryffindor Tower. "Oh, and tell James that I'd like my Map back."

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## **Snape's Worst Nightmare April Fools**

"Detention, Weasley."

Heidi blinked in surprise, and looking up from her potion and around the quiet, dank dungeon classroom to see which of her cousins had managed to get another detention. Her confused gaze settled on the oily professor, who was staring straight at her.

Heidi blinked again, her mouth opening in surprise. She hadn't done anything wrong! She hadn't even made any noise! Her potion was coming along perfectly. Why was Snape looking at her? Wordlessly, she pointed to herself.

"Yes, Weasley. You," sneered Snape, his white teeth almost glittering in the low light. "Tonight, at seven. If you are late, I'll give you another."

Turning away from the astonished girl, Snape twisted his shoulders to make his dark cloak swirl dramatically around behind him. Brianna had previously pointed out to the others in the class how he deliberately made such movements to appear more dramatic. Now, when Snape performed such a move, soft groans could be heard from some of the first-years, while hushed exclamations of victory came from others.

It had been Arthur's idea to create a fictitious book, just before Snape almost caught them manipulating Ignates and his friends. At the time it had served its purpose in distracting Slytherin's head of house, but it had taken Chris and James to turn it into a true money making venture. What had started off as an attempted distraction, soon became a fixture, one that had quickly spread from the first year Gryffindor students to the other years, and finally to the other houses.

Chris Weasley smirked to himself, and surreptitiously pulled out a small notebook from his robes. With subtle hand gestures, he signaled the various winners and losers around the room.

One Slytherin student hissed in jubilation, having made five galleons. Snape's head whipped round fast enough that the creaking of the vertebrae in his neck could clearly be heard. Those who had just lost money had an easier time schooling their faces into expressions of innocence than those who had just been enriched.

"Detention, Potter," he snarled at Remus and Sirius.



"Which of us, sir?" asked Remus respectfully.

"Both of you," spat Snape, who continued to march up to the head of the class.

The two Potters exchanged confused and outraged glances. Remus closed his eyes and took a deep breath, dispelling his anger. Sirius however, let his face flush red with rage. It was only James' quick shaking of his head that convinced Sirius to hold his tongue.

After an eternity, the bell rang, and the first year students silently started packing up their cauldrons and supplies. As soon as they left the room, still firmly under the gaze of Snape, the students started babbling about the unfairness of it all.

"Something's going on," muttered Zachary. "I was watching Snape trying to goad a reaction out of Heidi, and she was just working quietly, completely oblivious to him. She did nothing wrong at all, and he gave her a detention."

"You know, that makes most of us with detentions tonight," said Brianna, stroking her chin. "I got one this morning from Madam Hooch," she admitted.

Isabella raised one perfect eyebrow. "For what?"

Brianna blushed crimson. "I accidentally went higher than I expected, and squealed. She gave me it for disturbing the other students."

Most of the others chuckled at this. Brianna was so like her mother in attitude, aptitude and skills that most of the teachers thought Hermione had been cloned. This not only extended from her bookish tendencies but also to her complete and utter lack of anything resembling grace on a broom. It was only her father's temper and lack of respect for ill-thought rules that hinted at her Weasley blood.

Charlie frowned. "I didn't hear you at all, and I was in the closest group. How could she think that you were disturbing us?"

Arthur shook his head. "It's obvious. She didn't. But for some reason, the teachers are giving us detentions. I got one from Flitwick of all people."

"You know," said James, "I'd say that all of should go to McGonagall. Tell her what is going on."

"I'm not so sure," replied William. "She gave me one for running in the corridors. And 'Bella already got one from Snape earlier. Does any one of us not have a detention tonight?"

"Apparently not," grumbled Alex after looking around the faces of his fellow cousins. "I got my detention in muggle studies."

Remus snorted. "Yeah, but you were supposed to bring in an example of a way that muggles 'disseminate information'."

"They spread news in magazines!" hissed Alex.

Remus smirked. "Yeah, but that particular magazine isn't generally purchased for the articles."

Of the three curious female cousins, only Heidi needed another clue before turning bright red and whacking Alex on the arm.

"Look, let's just all go and see professor McGonagall now that classes have finished for the day, and see what she says," said Brianna.

Some of them grumbled, some looked unconvinced, but in the end the Nightmare Dozen decided to visit their head of house.

"Enter!" came the clipped tones of the deputy headmistress after James knocked on her door.

The heavy iron bound oaken door silently swung open, and the twelve cousins entered the room. McGonagall did not appear surprised to see them.

"What can I do for you, Messers Potter and Weasley?" she asked.

James swallowed. "Um, Professor, this week some of us have been singled out by some of the professors for unwarranted detentions. We were wondering if you wouldn't mind finding out why?"

McGonagall raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure you are being singled out?" she asked pointedly.

Heidi nodded. "I got a detention from professor Snape today for absolutely nothing."

Brianna nodded too. "I got one for a small squeal of fright when I went higher than I expected to on my broom."

McGonagall pursed her lips together, giving them all a stern look. "Have you come here just to make accusations against my colleagues of unfairness?" she demanded of them.

"Well..." began James.

"Silence!" snapped McGonagall. All twelve jumped slightly at the professor's unexpected outburst. "You will all do your detentions without complaints, or I shall give you all another."

Arthur and Chris exchanged looks, a frown forming on their features. "We didn't say that we *all* had detentions," offered Christopher.

McGonagall a sudden look of apprehension and annoyance flitted across her face, but she recovered quickly. "Get out. All of you. I don't want to hear another word about unfair detentions, from any of you," she snapped.

Silently, the berated students left her office. Heidi looked close to tears.

"What is going on?" she asked, her voice thick.

Arthur shook his head. "I don't know. But McGonagall already knew that we all had detentions. How? Snape only gave Sirius and Remmie theirs a few minutes ago."

"Unless she is in on the reason we are getting them," offered Chris gloomily.

Brianna looked furious at her cousin. "How dare you suggest that?" she snarled. "Professor McGonagall has always been even handed, no matter what house a student is in."

"Unless you are in Gryffindor," pointed out Zachary. "She expects more from us."

Brianna suddenly looked defeated. "Mum always told me that the professors could be trusted," she said, frustration hissing from her words. "What can we do if they have been charmed or something?"

"Should we go to Dumbledore?" asked Heidi.

The normally silent Charlie shook his head. "I got my detention from him."

Eleven pairs of disbelieving eyes focused on their enormous relative.

Isabella grabbed her brother's hand. "Dumbledore gave you a detention? For what?"

Charlie swallowed nervously. "At breakfast, in the Great Hall. When I arrived I pushed open the door, and knocked over some students on the other side."

"He gave you detention for that?" blurted Alex. "I saw it! That was an accident! That's just wrong!"

Charlie shook his head. "No, the students I knocked over were all going to hex me. Dumbledore stepped in and gave me a detention. I thought at the time it was to stop the others from attacking me. Now, I'm not so sure."

James snorted. "I don't think Dad ever got a detention from Dumbledore. You should be proud."

Remus looked at his brother, a smile forming. "Dad!" he shouted. "Has anyone got one from him?"

Eleven shaking heads was his answer.

"Let's go!" Remus continued. "If anyone knows what is going on, he will."

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Harry sighed at the timid knock at his door. "Come in Remus," he said.

There was a slight pause before the door opened, and twelve astonished faces could be seen in the

massive doorway.

"How did you know it was me?" his son asked, confusion clearly evident on his face.

Harry remained silent and just beckoned them into his warm office, quickly transfiguring some firewood into comfortable chairs to allow all of his many visitors to sit.

Once the three raven and nine red heads were seated, Harry sat behind his messy desk, clasped his hands together and leaned forward. "I presume this is not a social visit."

Chris cleared his throat. "Um, Professor, can we talk to you as Uncle Harry?"

Harry raised one eyebrow, but nodded. He leaned back in his oversized armchair and put his feet on his desk. With a grin that reminded every one of the Weasleys present of the triplets in their midst, Harry clasped his hands behind his head. "So, exactly what brings you here?" he asked them.

"Dad, I- er, we think there might be something wrong with the other Professors," said James.

Harry faintly smiled. "Ah, I was wondering when you lot would come to me."

Sirius and Arthur exchanged vaguely outraged expressions. "What do you mean?" Sirius demanded.

Harry lost his smile and sighed deeply. "Let me guess," he started, scratching lightly at the side of his neck while staring at the ceiling. "For some reason, your Professors have changed. They seem to be very unforgiving at the moment, giving you detentions for every little thing." He lowered his gaze and looked back down at them. "Or in the case of your Potions Professor, for no reason at all."

Harry looked around at the sea of blankly surprised faces.

"Well?" he said at the silence. "How did I do so far?"

Arthur finally shook his head to clear it. "You know? Is there something wrong with them?"

Harry's face coloured. "Only their judgment," he muttered darkly. "Tell me what has happened."

Bit by bit, their story came out. Each cousin interrupted the other in an effort to be the most affronted at receiving a detention, Alex losing dramatically.

Harry listened, absently writing on the top sheet of a sheaf of parchment. His expression spoke of his complete disinterest in their plight until what happened in McGonagall's office came to light.

"She what?" he spat, interrupting Heidi.

Heidi jumped at her uncle's sudden outburst. "Um, she said that we had to serve the detentions or

she'd give us another one."

Harry stared at his niece, his emerald eyes flashing fire. With one smooth and graceful movement, he whipped his feet off the desk, spun in his chair and tossed a pinch of powder in the fire behind him.

"Minerva, I need to speak with you. Immediately," he growled.

A few seconds later, the deputy headmistress' head appeared in the flames. "Yes, Harry?"

"Your presence is required. In my office. Now," he said in a monotone.

McGonagall blinked, and the Nightmare Dozen silently gasped in disbelief at Harry's attitude.

"I beg your pardon, Potter?" McGonagall demanded.

"You heard me," said Harry, his voice soft but holding an unmistakable hint of steel. With those parting words, he turned away from the fire. He smiled widely at his assembled sons, nieces and nephews. "Now, ladies and gentlemen. Listen, and learn." With that, he schooled his features into an expressionless mask.

The Potter triplets knew that look well. "Brace yourselves," they whispered to their cousins.

Less than sixty seconds later, Harry's office door burst open. Framed in the doorway was the furious form of Professor McGonagall. "Potter, you had better have a damned good reason-"

Harry slammed his fist down on his desk, the loud sharp noise interrupting her mid-tirade. "I thought it best to ensure that there was a reason you had abandoned your duty to your charges before going to Albus and demanding that someone else be given the responsibility of leading Gryffindor!" Harry roared.

The thought that she had been derelict in her duty brought McGonagall up short. "I beg your pardon? When have I ever abandoned my duty?"

Harry snarled. "The day you refused to give a straight answer to members of your house who both requested and *deserved* it."

McGonagall looked around the room, noting the presence of Harry's rather extended family. "Well-"

"Perhaps you believe that Gryffindor doesn't need a head of house? Hmmmm? That any Gryffindor student who believes that something is wrong with the people in authority should just ignore it, and not bring it to the attention of their head of house?"

"Now that is simply untrue!"

"Then perhaps you'd like to explain why, when a gross disservice is done to some of your students,

that you immediately dismiss their concerns, even when you know for a fact that they are not imagining the reported behaviour?"

McGonagall swallowed. "Now, Harry, you know exactly what is going on."

"Really? All I see as a parent is your blatant evasion of responsibility. Would the other parents of Gryffindor students like to know that if their children are treated unfairly, that the head of Gryffindor will completely ignore it? Or worse, claims that it is the student's fault? Perhaps you believe that only students in the other houses are entitled to faculty representation?"

McGonagall's lips were pressed together as firmly as Harry had ever seen them. "How dare you accuse me of-"

Once more, Harry smashed his fist into his desk, causing all present to jump. He grabbed a sheet of parchment from his desk, held it up in front of McGonagall's face and crumpled it violently in one hand. "No, Minerva. How dare you abandon your duty. You knew before they did that they would all have a detention today, and you did nothing to stop it."

"Harry, you know why. You were there when the decision was made."

"As I recall, I didn't agree," Harry retorted, hurling the paper down on his desk. It bounced and rolled off onto the floor near James.

McGonagall looked decidedly uncomfortable. "You know that I felt that though it was a most difficult decision, it was in the best interests of-"

"Everyone for whom there was a possibility of them being inconvenienced, as opposed to twelve students who will definitely feel that there is no one in authority they can go to when they need to discuss their problems. Their *real* problems."

The deputy headmistress swallowed nervously and sighed. "Very well." She turned to the assembled first years. "Children, you do know that you can always come to me to talk about anything. I shall speak to the professors who gave you detentions for minor infractions."

Harry rolled his eyes. "What good will that do? You know they will just get them again."

McGonagall looked almost desperate. "What would you have me do?"

Harry stared straight at the head of Gryffindor before seeming to come to a decision. "Fine. Since you have just proved that the sorting hat was incorrect to place you in Gryffindor, I guess I'll have to dig you from your own grave." Turning from the spluttering professor, Harry focused his gaze on his eldest son.

"James! How dare you litter my office. Detention. For a week. For all of you," he snapped.

For three seconds there was absolute silence, with the exception of the crackling fire. Then, the room erupted into outraged babble.

"Really Harry," shouted McGonagall. "Was that really necessary?"

Harry turned a furious glare on her. "Only because of your cowardice. Now, the rest of the teachers can relax, your mission has been accomplished."

With that, he turned to the students. "Enough!" he roared, startling everyone to silence. "You will serve these detentions, and these detentions supercede any others you have received. James, you will be assisting Professor McGonagall, sorting and tidying her office. Sirius, likewise with Professor Sprout. Remus, Professor Flitwick."

Ignoring the startled looks he received, Harry counted off his fingers. "Arthur, you will assist Professor Snape in tidying his dungeon. Alex, you get Professor Vector and her office. Christopher, you will help tidy Madam Pince's library and quarters. Zachary, you get to help Professors Hagrid. Charles, you will clean Professor Trelawney's tower. Isabella, you get to help Madam Hooch.

"Heidi, you will be assisting Madam Pomfrey. Brianna, you will help tidy the Headmaster's office. God help you. William, you get Professor Sinistra and the Astronomy Tower."

Harry looked around his quiet office at the thirteen startled faces. "Minerva, please leave me with these students. They will serve their detentions for the entire week." Harry watched her nod cautiously and leave, closing the heavy oak door behind her.

Brianna looked close to tears. "But, Unc-, Professor Potter! Why?"

Harry's expression softened. "I'm sorry. But I cannot tell you anything." He started pacing behind his desk. "But you have enough to figure it out for yourselves," he said finally.

Brianna blinked, her threatened tears disappearing as her brilliant mind worked over what she knew.

"Just a minute!" he yelled as a forlorn dozen were filing out of his office. "Pick up your rubbish, that's what you got the detention for in the first place!"

A hurt and confused James picked up the crumpled ball then, with one final look of betrayal at his father, he turned and followed his cousins out of the room.

"Why did he do that?" demanded Alex, his face nearly as red as his hair. "I really thought he was listening to us, but if you ask me he's just as much of a bastard-"

"Then it's a good thing for us that you're not the brains of the outfit," snapped Chris.

"What do you mean?"

Chris sighed, and looked over at Remus. "Do you want to do the honours?"

Remus nodded, and turned to Alex. "What did my dad do?"

"He gave us detention for a week!"

"No Alex," replied Brianna. "He did in one go what all the professors were going to do to us over the course of a week." She looked into Alex's confused face. "Remember? After McGonagall said that she'd speak to the professors who gave us the detentions. He said that it wouldn't matter. I got the impression that we'd just get more detentions. That's why he gave us a full week in one go."

"Yeah, so we'd know what the teachers were trying to do," finished Remus, after giving Brianna a mock dark look. She poked her tongue out at him in return.

"Anyway," started James, "he told us that all the teachers but him agreed to it. Why?"

Brianna and Remus exchanged laughs. "What date is it a week from now?" she asked.

James frowned, counted silently for a few seconds and replied, "The first of April."

Zach, Charlie and Isabella all gave an, "Ohhhh!" of understanding.

Alex's eyes widened. "They wanted to keep us busy until after April Fools Day," he said in a hushed whisper.

Remus nodded. "Exactly."

Isabella and Heidi put on identical expressions of determination. "So, what do we do to get them back?"

James gave a tiny gasp of surprise as he uncrumpled the sheet of parchment he recovered from his father's office's floor. "I think my father had another reason for assigning us those detentions."

"What's that?" asked several of his cousins.

"I think dad wanted us to know the location of all the professor's offices," he ventured. "And the passwords that opened their rooms."

"Why?" asked Arthur, annoyed that he had 'scored' Snape.

"Because there is a list of charms on this sheet of parchment he made me pick up," James said with a grin. "A most interesting list indeed."

~~~

(1st April, 2012)

The headmaster of Hogwarts snorted and coughed as his bed rocked gently back and forth, the bobble of his nightcap waving around in the wind, tickling his nose.

Wind?



Dumbledore's eyes flittered open, and he blearily took in his surroundings. The expected surrounds of his familiar quarters were not what he laid his eyes on. The reason his bed was rocking became dreadfully apparant.

His four-poster was gently floating; floating in the middle of a lake. After an instant of serious worry, Dumbledore realised that it was in fact the Hogwart's lake. Looking around him, he noticed several things that set him on the road to full blown panic.

In the east, the overcast sky slowly lit up; gently bathing the lake with a redish light. Lighting up eleven floating beds.

A feminine shriek coming from the bed containing Madam Pince instantly caused the occupants of the other beds to suddenly awake with oaths and curses.

A splash announced the usual result of awakening Severus Snape suddenly; the potion master would leap out of bed in an instant should it be necessary. The hawk-nosed man broke the surface of the lake spluttering and coughing.

"What, in the name of all that is holy, is going on?" he demanded, his legendary temper instantly flaring. Snape's long fingered hands grabbed hold of his bedsheets, and he hauled himself, shivering and dripping, onto his fur-lined bed.

In seconds, all the teachers were babbling amongst themselves. From their frantic conversation and exclamations, it would appear that none of them had their wands. Or their Order portkeys.

Dumbledore shook his head. Whoever did this had managed to do some quite remarkable magic. Removing his nightcap, the ancient wizard gently leaned over and lowered his face to the lake's surface. Once his bearded features were submerged in the frigid water, he called out to one of his old friends who happened to be one of the lake's occupants.

A few minutes later, the chieftan of the merpeople surfaces a few meters away. With a chuckle, Albus requested assistance in returning to the shore in Merspeak. The assembled teachers sighed with relief when they saw who the headmaster was speaking to.

Each and every one of them were shocked into silence as the chieftan ignored Albus' request for assistance, and dived away into the lake's murky depths.

"Albus? What is going on?" demanded McGonagall.

Dumbledore hid his burgeoning smile. "I am beginning to have some suspicions, Minerva. Tell me, is there one of our number missing?"

It only took an instant for Hogwarts' Potion Master to blurt out something uncomplimentary. "Potter!" he spat.

"Indeed, Severus, indeed," Dumbledore calmly agreed. "Perhaps he can be contacted to assist us."

"We are witches and wizards, Albus," Madam Hooch exclaimed. "Surely we can assist ourselves."

"Do you happen to have your wand, Xiamara?" McGonagall asked waspishly. "Or do you happen to be as adept at swimming as you are at flying?"

"Ladies, please," interrupted the tiny Professor Flitwick, his tiny bed the size of a baby's cot. "I believe our first action should be to attempt to contact Harry and get his assistance."

"Surely he will attempt to locate us himself," snapped McGonagall. "Even though today is a Sunday, even Potter would be hard pressed to control the entire student body by himself."

"Oh please!" Snape snapped back. "You don't think that this is his work? Who else could do such a thing?"

Flitwick tilted his head to one side, thinking deeply. "The charms required to do this are not too complex or difficult, Severus, just obscure. I'd say any of our older students with average talent could accomplish this. It is more a matter of access to our sleeping quarters than knowledge."

"Exactly!" Snape retorted, pointing a shaking finger at the little wizard. "Potter knows where our rooms are. And he knows our passwords, which I think is an invasion of our privacy."

Flitwick shook his head. "No, these charms would have to be set over a period of time, a few days at least. Harry hasn't been in my office for over a month. And as the best Defense master in the school's history, are you surprised that he is able to divine our passwords?"

Snape grunted incomprehensively, and wrapped another blanket around himself.

The teachers were startled by the husband and wife pair of Rubeus and Olympe, as they ripped the headboard from their giant bed. Quickly and efficiently, Harry's oldest magical friend bent, twisted and pounded the metal into two servicable oars with his bare fists.

Amongst cheers from the other teachers, the blushing pair started rowing to shore.

Their bed had other ideas.

The four legs of the bed shimmered and came alive, walking over the surface of the lake and taking the pair back to where they started.

Only the diminutive charms professor was delighted. "Oh my, that is good work," he said, clapping his hands in appreciation. "Very good work indeed."

McGonagall gave him a sour look before an expression of dread covered her features. Clutching at the satin nightgown she wore, she asked, "Filius, you said before that the charms required were not difficult, and that an average upperclass student would be able to perform them."

"Yes, that's right," nodded the tiny man.

"Well, what about talented, younger students?"

~~~

For long hours did the crowd at the shore of the lake laugh and cheer at the attempts of the stranded teachers to make it to shore.

Hundreds of students lined the banks of the lake, placing bets, exchanging money and generally having a marvellous time. The objects of their attention were not having such a good day.

Since he was already cold and wet, Snape decided to try swimming for shore. He gave up after his head immediately started herding him back to the middle of the lake. That spectacle was good for a massive roar of laughter from the crowd.

At the back of the massive gathering of students, leaning against the castle wall, stood the Defense Professor, his emerald green eyes bright with mirth. His presence deterred the crowd of vengeful students from performing more pranks on the hapless teachers stuck in the middle of the lake. He scanned the crowd, looking for the tell tale sign of a giant red head surrounded by a group of shorter red heads.

It was easy to pick them out. Harry had been observing them periodically during the morning, noting that they had been getting progressively more nervous as noon approached.

He watched them intently for a while, gauging their mood. Zachary turned to look through the crowd and noticed that they were under scrutiny. Harry quickly waved them over.

It was not without a fairly large amount of apprehension that his sons, nieces and nephews approached him.

"What's the matter?" he asked them.

The Nightmare Dozen exchanged glances. "We weren't sure how you'd react to our prank?" said James.

Harry snorted. "Your prank?"

"Well, yes," James replied, looking around at his brothers and cousins.

"Let me see. I organised for you to spend a certain length of time in certain people's rooms, allowed you to see where they kept their wands and portkeys, showed you some rather specific charms, ensured the new wards don't alarm when people leave the castle after midnight, fed the giant squid a meal so large that it will sleep soundly for the next week, told the merchieftan that today many pranks would be pulled so if anything out of the ordinary happens he should steer clear for his own safety, and after all this you still think that all this was *your* prank?"

An unwelcome sensation washed over the assembled first years.

"It was all a set up. You set us up," said Remus, in absolute awe.

With a smirk not even a Malfoy could produce, Harry nodded. "I mentioned at the last staff meeting that you lot would probably have a big prank planned. I pushed the conversation to float the idea that you would all be given detentions, then to give you more later as you didn't complete them correctly. It would keep you occupied for a week."

Brianna looked at his Uncle with adoration on his face. "It was all you. You got them to do the very thing that would cause us to pull a prank against them."

Chris and Zack swapped glances. "Man, we thought we had the best idea. But you knew what we would do all along."

"Don't feel too bad," said Harry. "You can take the credit for it if you wish. With the students at least. The staff will know the truth."

"Why?" all twelve asked together.

Harry laughed out loud. "Because I want Snape to know that it was me who manipulated him into doing something that caused him to spend a freezing morning on Hogwarts lake," he said. "Why on earth else?"

"You know, Uncle Harry, we thought that all of us together would be Snape's worst nightmare," started Chris. "But we don't come close to you."

Harry ruffled Chris' hair. "Not yet, but you've got time to get there." He looked up as the Hogwarts' bell rung midday. He turned to look out on the lake to see the dozen beds start making their way back to shore. "Now scoot," he told them. "This is going to be fun."

--

Snape's Worst Nightmare Them v Us

The significantly loud groan that swept through the large crowd as the Slytherin seeker grabbed the snitch was completely drowned out by the eruption of noise coming from the section of the crowd wearing green. The Slytherin Seeker Warrick held the struggling golden ball aloft as he raced around the stadium in a victory lap.

"That smarmy git needs to live it up, since this is only the second time he's actually caught the bloody thing," sneered James.

Sirius nodded, his eyes narrowed with dislike. Isabella simply crossed her arms and huffed.

Since their embarrassing loss to Gryffindor earlier in the year, the Slytherin Quidditch team had taken their offensive tactics off the pitch. In what Professor Snape ludicrously claimed was a startling coincidence, fully half the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff teams, including both seekers, had taken ill the night before their respective games against Slytherin. All with identical symptoms. Symptoms which corresponded remarkably well to a very rare condition that previously only affected a specific species of lemurs found only on Madagascar, or those from imbibing a certain colourless, odourless and tasteless potion that Professor Snape had assigned as extra homework for his OWL level Slytherin students.

Against inexperienced and unpracticed opposition, Slytherin had romped home to victory in both games with over five hundred point margins, Warrick catching the snitch both times.

Ravenclaw had managed to defeat Gryffindor by a measly ten points in the best game of the year, which meant that Slytherin's two wins placed them equal with Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. In such a case, the number of points scored during the year broke the deadlock, handing the cup to Slytherin. To say that the mood of the crowd was bad was a serious understatement.

None of the Potter/Weasley clan noticed the fire in Isabella's eyes as she glared at the smug form of the Slytherin Seeker do another victory lap. The disgusted roar of the crowd covered her defiant declaration, "I'm going to do something about this!"

~~~

James, Sirius and Remus were making their way back to the castle with Arthur, all four of them mumbling at how the Slytherins had made a mockery of the game of Quidditch. In front of them

was the celebratory group around Warrick, moving slowly towards the castle itself.

"Come on." said James, and he increased his speed, to overtake the cheering group.

The four made it past the mob before being hailed.

"Well, Potters. Looks like Gryffindor finally lost the cup."

Arthur rolled his eyes. "Just noticed that did you. Your powers of observation are truly startling."

James sneered at the Slytherin seeker. "Yeah, I'm sure everyone was impressed at how it only took you almost six hours to find the snitch."

Warrick sneered back at the Potter trio. "Like you'd know anything about actually playing Quidditch. Your family's always had the best brooms so you haven't had to actually learn to play, you just rely on your equipment."

Remus snorted. "Funny, that's not what the Slytherins were saying when Draco Malfoy bought his way onto the team back when my Dad was playing. His father bought top of the line brooms for every team member, you know."

Arthur grinned. "I don't seem to recall off the top of my head... Exactly how many Quidditch cups did Slytherin win while Draco was at school?"

Remus turned to face his cousin. "I do believe it was, let me see, yes... Zero."

"I see Remus. So, having a top of the range broom *doesn't* assist you to victory when you are in fact, a no talent hack."

"Exactly Arthur."

"Do you think anyone with the intelligence of a brain dead flobberworm would be able to understand that?"

Remus theatrically scratched his head. "You know, I would certainly hope so."

"Evidence would appear to exist to the contrary, however." deadpanned Arthur, looking Warrick up and down.

Warrick glared at the pair looking murderous, until he turned his gaze behind the group. His expression changed to one of sleaziness. "Well, well. Why don't you come along to our party my dear, I'm sure you'd be welcome."

Arthur and Remus turned to see their Uncle Bill's children make their way down the stairs leading up into the castle. Isabella Weasley gazed down at the smirking seeker with contempt. "Why on earth would I want to associate myself with you?"

Warrick was undeterred, the mob behind him giving him shouts of encouragement. "Because then you'd be associating yourself with winners, instead of losers."

Isabella threw her arm out to stop her brother from tearing Warrick's arms from his sockets and beating him around the head with the soggy ends. Given Charlie's navel was the same height as her shoulder, it took a fair bit of effort on the beautiful girl's part. "You think that because you managed to beat two weakened sides that makes you a winner?"

Warrick casually shrugged. "I'm the one with the trophy."

Isabella narrowed her eyes dangerously. "Would you care to wager that very trophy?"

Charlie's eyes widened at the tone in his sister's voice. "Bella!" he said softly, trying to get her attention.

Isabella ignored him. "Well?" she pointedly asked the Slytherin.

He looked her up and down with a leer. "I can think of something I'd bet it on." The mob gave him another cheer.

"Right. Here is the wager. A single Quidditch match. Slytherin verses my family. We win, we get the trophy."

Warrick raised his eyebrows. "And when you lose?"

*"If we lose, I'll be your girlfriend for the rest of the time you are at Hogwarts."*

Charlie, Remus and Arthur all gasped "Bella!" at the same time.

"Shut up." she snapped at them. "Well?" she asked, turning back to Warrick.

A great many expressions flashed across the Slytherin seeker's face. Lust was there, along with pride and anticipation. Mixed in though, was not a little hesitation and fear of being humiliated.

"If you're not man enough to make the decision yourself, go ahead and talk to your team mates. Hell, talk to Snape if you feel the need for reassurance. Term ends in three days. Give me your answer tomorrow morning, and we'll play on the last day of term." said Isabella completely calmly, to the absolute horror of her brother and cousins.

~~~

Severus Snape scowled as he graded yet another abomination of an essay. His quill made quick time as it scratched its way over the parchment quickly, liberally spreading caustic insults in red ink over the page. With great satisfaction, he wrote 'D' on the top of the scroll, then placed it on top of the pile of completed marking.

With a cross between a growl and a sigh, the slimy potion master took the next essay from the still

large pile of his student's attempts at essay writing.

"I suppose it is my own fault for giving them essays in the first place."

A confident knock sounded on his new door. "Enter." Snape said imperiously. The door swung silently open on its hinges, not yet old enough to have developed a really good creak.

An expression of loathing slid onto his features as he beheld the Defense professor. "What do you want, Potter?"

Harry strolled forward and casually transfigured a comfortable armchair out of one of Snape's discomfort inducing creations. "I wanted to talk to you about the upcoming Quidditch match." he said as he sat down.

Snape sneered. "You've come to try and talk me out of letting your spawn be humiliated?"

Harry's lips twitched into a tiny smile. "No, I've come to make sure that Warrick isn't being pressured into doing something he shouldn't."

Snape narrowed his eyes and glared at his unwelcome visitor. "What do you mean?"

"I assume you are fully aware of the specifics of the wager made?"

"Naturally."

Harry nodded. "Are you satisfied that Warrick is acting of his own accord, and is not being coerced?"

Snape lowered the quill. "Explain."

"Warrick is an exceptional student in Defense. I understand that he is looking to enter the auror academy when he leaves Hogwarts, should he not be offered a place with one of the national Quidditch teams."

"So?"

"So the terms of the wager say that Isabella will be his girlfriend for the remainder of his time at Hogwarts. While he still has two years to go, Isabella will still not be at the age of consent by the time he leaves. Should he try and take liberties with her person, charges may be brought against him."

"I see, you are here because you fear for your niece's virtue."

Harry snorted. "Hardly. From her Defense performance this year, even if the kids lose she can take care of herself. And if she needs help, she has her walking mountain of a brother. I'm just worried that Warrick may give into pressure, and put himself in a position where his future prospects may be endangered."

Snape stared at Harry for a long time. Finally, he broke the silence. "I shall speak to the boy. Is that all you came for?"

Harry nodded and stood up. With a quick wave of his hand, the chair he had requisitioned popped back into a hard, straight-backed stool, knowing that the blasé use of wandless magic would irritate his colleague. "That's it. I appreciate your time."

Snape smirked at him. "I'm glad you are thinking about the consequences of the wager in terms of the foregone conclusion. I had thought that you would believe your family actually stood a chance."

Harry shrugged and walked out the door, pausing just before he closed it. The-Boy-Who-Lived threw his own smirk back at Snape. "Oh, I think they'll mop the floor with your team. I'm just here because I'm living proof that the impossible can happen."

Snape spluttered briefly.

Harry cocked his head to one side. "You fancy a wager yourself?"

~~~

At the same instant Harry goaded Snape into a hissing frenzy, Isabella Weasley quietly closed the door to McGonagall's office, having been summoned that night at dinner. She gracefully sat in one of McGonagall's armchairs, patiently waiting for her house head to begin.

McGonagall simply eyed the girl as she entered. Once seated, McGonagall placed her clasped hands on the desk and leaned forward. "I trust you can explain what you are doing."

Isabella raised a perfect golden eyebrow. "Yes, I can."

"Well?" asked McGonagall, after a moment of silence.

"That cup doesn't belong to them. Slytherin only won it because they sabotaged their opposition in their final two games." said Isabella hotly.

"That is beside the point. I will not have any of my charges wager their affection on a silly lump of tin."

"You were a lot more vocal about keeping it during the year."

"Miss Weasley, while I do not deny that I have become quite accustomed to displaying the trophy in my office over the last few years, I will not allow you to sell yourself just to keep it here."

"Who said you'd be displaying it in your office?" replied Isabella tartly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"The Slytherin names are still on the trophy. If we win, I'll keep it out of sight. They won't be able to gloat over it."

"You are gambling your virtue just to keep some self-centered students from bragging?" exclaimed McGonagall.

"I'm not gambling." replied Isabella from between clenched teeth.

McGonagall tilted her head back and looked down her nose at her charge. "Surely you are not suggesting that you are capable of winning? Though your family has produced many talented players over the years, you are all still in first year. You would be playing against an experienced team who have been practicing all year. I'm afraid I cannot allow you to--"

"You can't stop me!" spat Isabella, her face almost glowing with anger.

"I most certainly can."

"How? You can't prohibit a Quidditch match from being played. You can't prohibit anyone from being someone else's girlfriend. You can't prevent some first-years from playing in a Quidditch match, at least not after you let my Uncle play in his first year. You can't even ban gambling. Exactly how do you think you can stop me?"

Professor McGonagall could not think of an answer.

~~~

News of the Quidditch challenge ran through the school like a bad curry.

In true Slytherin style, the Quidditch pitch was booked for the entire three days by Professor Snape, in an effort to annoy Harry. In true Gryffindor style, the Potter and Weasley team claimed that they didn't need the practice, and that Slytherin definitely did.

On the night before the game however, two figures could be made out swooping over the Quidditch pitch at midnight. An experienced watcher would have recognised the plays being practiced as those performed by experienced seekers.

One of the flyers was quite obviously the Defense professor. The other, a beautiful, part-veela witch.

~~~

The day dawned crisp and cool, and the morning mist burned away quickly. Though the match was not scheduled to begin for an hour, already groups of people could be seen claiming choice seats. Harry calmly scanned the stadium, searching for Harry turned at the familiar voice. Behind him in the stands was a very familiar, but weathered face. "Remus!" he shouted through a delighted smile, overjoyed at seeing his old friend.

A similar smile graced the features of the last Marauder. Though only in his late forties, the ravages of his forced monthly transformations made Remus Lupin look two decades older. The pair shared a warm embrace, to the bemusement of the Headmaster.

"You really should come by more often, Remus." quipped Dumbledore. "Young Harry here has been getting rather dour in his old age."

Remus gave him a sour look, but released Harry to give the Headmaster a handshake. "Albus, the day Harry begins to act dour is the day you should give him his marching orders."

Dumbledore raised an eyebrow. "I was certainly tempted to do just that earlier in the year."

Remus looked at Harry in surprise. "What's this?"

Harry shrugged. "Some unnamed Hogwarts professors decided that a good offensive against a certain dozen troublemakers on April Fools Day was their best defense. Giving said students a week of detention before the day in question turned out to be a mistake. A rather large mistake."

An amused smile tugged at the werewolf's mouth. "What happened?"

Dumbledore spoke up. "I don't think we need to go into that, do we?"

Harry snorted. "You brought it up, old man."

"Then I appear to be making even more mistakes in my dotage."

"I'll say."

Remus growled deep in his throat. "Will one of you please tell me what happened?"

Dumbledore sighed. "Professor Potter here overturned the detentions given by other members of staff. Then promptly gave each of the 'Dozen Nightmares' a weeks worth of detention, helping a different professor each in their quarters. He happened to let a list of charms slip into their possession, enabling them to charm the staff's beds to venture out onto the lake while we slept."

Remus burst into laughter. "So you woke up in the middle of the lake?"

Dumbledore nodded ruefully, while Harry just grinned at him. "I told you that it was a mistake."

"Yes, yes, yes. I would thank you to keep your self-satisfied recriminations to yourself." finished Dumbledore haughtily.

Remus laughed and went to sit down when a bundle of shrieking joy clambered up the stands and leapt into his arms. "Remus! You came!"

Harry smiled himself at his exuberant wife as she gave his old friend a traditional Weasley hug. Behind his wife was his two daughters, Lily holding Margaret's hand. Harry beckoned them over

and gave them both a warm hug. He looked around, knowing that the a large contingent of red-headed wizards and witches would soon be arriving.

~~~

Madam Hooch tossed the Quaffle and blew her whistle, indicating the start of the match. Isabella zoomed vertically, Chris and Zach split for one of the wings each and Charlie covered the goals. The Potter triplets zoomed off towards the Slytherin goal, ignoring the surprised Slytherin chasers, who for the first time this year managed to accept possession of the Quaffle straight away.

"Well this is a surprise, the Potters have allowed Slytherin possession of the Quaffle without contesting it! "

Gleefully accepting their good fortune, the three green-robed chasers sped towards the enormous form of Charlie Weasley. The large boy simply floated on his broom in front of the center hoop, seemingly bored with the proceedings.

Flint grabbed the Quaffle from his teammate, determined to score first. With a quick feint, he tossed the Quaffle at the top goal.

His mouth dropped open as Charlie casually reached up with his gorilla-like arms, snatching the Quaffle out of the air without moving from his position in front of the center hoop. With a grunt of effort, he hurled it away straight down the field.

Flint turned, his face paling as he realised just how out-of-position his team was. The Slytherin beater twins tried to intercept the Quaffle by hitting a bludger at it, but the ball sailed unimpeded into the waiting arms of James Potter. O'Mally steeled himself to intercept the shot at goal, only to find himself dizzy as James, Remus and Sirius twisted and turned on each other, looking like they were being juggled by some invisible giant as they sped towards him.

All three chasers split at the same instant, all going for a different goal with one arm hidden behind their backs. O'Mally just gaped as they all hefted their arms as one, each aiming for a different hoop. Only Sirius had the ball though, and it sailed easily through the lower hoop.

"Brilliant weaving by the Potter chasers, completely bamboozling O'Mally, who appears to need a nervous system to actually give him reactions. "

Sirius waved to his family in the crowd before flying off towards the center of the pitch. This was just getting fun.

~~~

The match had been progressing poorly for Slytherin. While the team itself was well practised and skilled, the casual talent the Gryffindor first-years were displaying was morale sapping. Flint had just taken another shot at goal, the lower one this time, but the massive keeper simply swiveled

his stationary broom and hung by his knees, snatching the Quaffle before it entered the goal. Warrick shook his head. Charlie Weasley hadn't moved so much as a metre from his position the entire game.

"Not bad, is he?" smirked Isabella with pride at her brother's ease at stopping all but a handful of scoring attempts so far.

Warrick sneered back at his counterpart, only to have her toss her head in dismissal. Her glorious eyes widened suddenly, and she dove straight down.

Warrick swore to himself, but tucked himself down and followed.

Once he had his broom aligned on the same descent vector as Isabella's he focused his gaze in front of her, searching for the telltale flash of gold. Almost instantly, the Gryffindor witch shifted slightly, adjusting her trajectory, obviously following a moving snitch. Warrick swallowed and forced his broom to follow, still unsure of where the snitch was.

Again and again over the course of only a handful of seconds Isabella changed course minutely. Warrick knew it wasn't a feint, she was shifting around just like you did when you were chasing the snitch. He couldn't believe he had managed to keep up with her though, since she had... a better... broom...

A sudden prickly feeling of unease swept through him, and Warrick gave a startled yelp of surprise as he changed his focus from Isabella's shapely rear to the ground beneath them. As the witch pulled up with less than a meter of clearance, Warrick realised he had been duped.

With all his strength, he hauled up on his broom, but it was not enough. The last thing he registered was just how pretty all the individual blades of grass were.

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The crowd roared its approval as the hated Slytherin Seeker performed a very good impersonation of a dart.

"BRILLIANT WRONSKI FEINT! " shouted the commentator while jumping up and down with excitement, hollering as loud as he could. **"Weasley caught Warrick hook, line and sinker with that one! Someone should have told Warrick that it Quidditch is played in the air, not on the ground. Man, that's GOT to hurt! "**

Madam Pomfrey raced out into the middle of the pitch and tended to the stunned boy. The Slytherin team were distracted enough that James managed to fly straight through the upper goal hoop without interference, cheekily *carrying* the Quaffle through for a goal.

Isabella simply flew over to where Snape sat in the stands, his face almost Gryffindor red. Slowly, she raised a single finger, daintily licked the tip and made a motion as if chalking a '1' in the air. With that taunt, she turned and flew back to her scouting position, high above the action.

Snape simply screamed incoherently at his team as the school nurse began patching up the injured Seeker.

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Remus gave a quick hand signal to Zach, then flew straight at the Slytherin Chaser formation. As soon as they noticed his approach, the two larger chasers positioned themselves in his way. Remus barrel-rolled on his broom allowing the bludger his cousin had aimed at his back to fly past and break up the Slytherin chaser's defensive formation, who all gave off startled squawks of surprise except Flint, who spat curses and blood as the surprise attack broke his nose.

**"Unbelievable move there by Weasley and Potter! Potter shields the bludger from the Slytherins with his body, dodging at the last second, giving them no time to react. Flint is off to seek medical attention, perhaps Pomfrey can give him a talent injection at the same time!"**

By the time the Slytherins had gathered their wits, Remus had passed the captured Quaffle off to James. O'Mally screamed his abuse at his teammates as once more the Potter triplets evaded his defenses and scored.

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It took all of the Slytherin chaser's skills to evade the lumbering form of Charlie Weasley and score. Twice during the game, a Slytherin chaser had given in to his instincts, and committed a foul in an attempt to score. The cursed brooms took their revenge however, causing the offenders much discomfort.

Warrick had finally been allowed back onto the field against Madam Pomfrey's wishes, his head and neck swathed in bandages. Isabella flew up to him.

"Can you see anything at all with those on?"

Warrick growled at her. "Go away." he snapped.

Isabella shrugged. "Just thought you should know that the snitch is behind you."

Warrick swung his neck around, only to grab it with his free hand and groan. "You absolute-"

"There it is." shouted Isabella, gleefully zooming off.

Warrick glanced in the direction she was flying, not keen to be the subject of another feint, only to see that the part-veela girl was in fact chasing a flicker of gold. Cursing inventively, Warrick turned and flew after her.

As Isabella zoomed after the snitch, her passage could easily be made out as a wave of cheers followed her around the stadium. Ducking a bludger sent her way by one of the Slytherin beaters, she weaved expertly amongst the play.

Where Isabella used finesse, Warrick used force. He braced himself and just flew as fast as his broom could handle, not caring to dodge players or bludgers. His suicidal run allowed him to catch up with Isabella as she followed the snitch right up to the Gryffindor end of the field.

Breaking a cardinal rule, Isabella took her eyes off the snitch to look behind her. With a wicked grin, she wiggled her bottom at Warrick, and dove for the snitch as it dropped several metres.

Gritting his teeth, Warrick followed, swerving around the Gryffindor keeper. No one on a broom would be able to stay on course after a collision with Charlie Weasley.

Isabella jerked back on her broom, zooming back past Warrick almost vertically. With a grunt, he pulled up on his own broom, following the girl.

Isabella then dived and twisted to her right in a difficult maneuver designed to quickly change directions without losing sight of the snitch. Warrick tried to follow suit, but didn't quite have the skill. Instead, he took a shortcut, and leaned backwards into a blind dive.

Only to smash headlong into the tall goalpost.

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As Madam Pomfrey tended to the wounded boy again, Isabella hovered in front of Snape, daintily licked her fingertip, and drew two '1's in the air.

Snape was on his feet, jumping up and down, screaming blue murder.

~~~

It took even longer for Warrick to rejoin his team in the air this time. In that time Isabella had gleefully shadowed the snitch twice, playing the crowd. The non-green portion of the crowd were screaming their approval.

Chris and Zach herded the bludgers towards the center of the pitch, then battered them both at the same time towards Charlie Weasley. The seemingly traitorous move stunned the Slytherin chasers, allowing Remus to intercept a pass and fly towards the Slytherin goal.

Remus flew in the lead, Sirius on his tail, James on his. The three flew as though they were sitting on an elongated broomstick, straight as an arrow. Without the bludgers around to disrupt their flight, they charged down the Slytherin keeper.

Remus reared up to throw the Quaffle at the top goal, only to let it fall back over his shoulder as he climbed vertically. Sirius collected the Quaffle without missing a beat and made his own feint at the middle goal, mimicking his brother's pass.

James collected the Quaffle and quickly threw.

At the middle goal.

O'Mally had dropped to defend the lower goal, and watched helplessly as the Quaffle flew through the middle hoop.

The commentator screamed his approval, almost drowned out by the crowd.

~~~

Warrick woosily sailed around the field, his broomstick wobbling uncertainly. Isabella drew up beside him.

"Do you want to withdraw your wager now?" she asked him.

Warrick looked over at her, his eyes vaguely unfocused. "You haven't caught the snitch, even with me out of the game for a while." he sneered.

Isabella rolled her eyes. "I could have caught it three times over."

Warrick's expression turned uncertain. "Yeah, right."

Isabella shrugged. "Want to try for a third time?" She poked her tongue out and pulled away, racing off to the wings.

Warrick grunted, not willing to be shown up by a first-year Gryffindor female.

The Sorting Hat didn't put him in Ravenclaw for a reason.

~~~

For the third time that game, Warrick was completely outclassed. Isabella lazily looped and twisted, her long golden-red hair streaming out behind her. She gave a quick hand signal to Chris and Zach, who nodded back.

Warrick missed this, and simply flew after her.

The Slytherin seeker blinked to clear his vision, and saw a flash of gold. Foregoing subtlety, he simply charged towards the snitch, desperate to catch it. He had no idea what the score was, had no idea if Slytherin would lose if he caught it. He just wanted to catch it for himself. To prove that he was the better seeker.

For the first time in his life, he actually became a true seeker.

Not for long though.

A quick shout of "Incoming!" intruded on his determination. In his peripheral vision, Warrick noticed a rapidly approaching bludger. He dived under it, only fly into the path of the other bludger. He ducked that one too.

Isabella zoomed in front of him, lying almost flat against her broom. Warrick growled to himself, pulling up on his broom in an effort to pull himself out of the dive he was forced into.

And flew straight into the stands.

Straight into the Slytherin crowd.

A roar of approval swept through the stands, again drowning out the commentator. As Isabella's delicate fingers wrapped around the golden snitch, a single voice could be heard over the noise of the crowd.

"**NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!**" shrieked Professor Snape.

For the final time, Isabella performed her taunt, chalking up three dashes in the air in front of the apoplectic Severus Snape.

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Twelve excited (including seven sweaty) pre-teens gathered in Professor McGonagall's office. Isabella's smile didn't look like disappearing any time soon. Among the self congratulations and family pride, a cup with seven Slytherin student's names was passed around.

Caricatures had been drawn over the names, Warrick's being swathed in bandages.

Not even the entrance of four teachers could dampen the Nightmare Dozen's enthusiasm.

Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Potter and Snape entered, looking delighted, quietly happy, proud and livid respectively.

"I do believe congratulations are in order." said the Headmaster, his eyes twinkling.

"Thank you, sir." replied Chris.

"This is ridiculous!" snapped Snape. "Give me the trophy, it belongs in my office."

"I hardly think so, Severus." said McGonagall, her nose pointed upwards. "The terms of the wager were quite clear."

Snape glowered at her, before turning to Harry. "I suppose you are going to insist on our wager being honoured." he grunted.

Harry raised an eyebrow and tilted his head to one side. "Naturally. Can you say that you wouldn't be insisting the same of me?"

All others present stared at the pair. "What on earth did you wager?" asked Dumbledore.

Snape's expression twisted into one of hatred. "Never mind. I will adhere to the terms. For a full

year."

Harry chuckled. "I don't believe we specified a time frame. After all, had you won, my resignation would have been permanent."

Snape paled even more than usual as realisation struck. McGonagall gasped. "Harry? You gambled your job?"

Harry nodded, a comfortable smile on his face.

All eyes turned towards the Potion Master. "What on earth could you have offered him that he would risk having to resign, Severus?"

Snape glanced at the assembled students, a fearful expression on his face. "Never mind. I will tell you in private."

Harry's smile turned evil. "Are you sure? I'm quite confident they will work it out sooner rather than later."

"Yes!" Snape almost shrieked. "Shut up, Potter!"

Dumbledore looked from one to the other. "Is this something I should know about?"

Harry turned to Dumbledore. "Severus has promised never to-"

"Potter!" Snape pleaded.

"-give another detention to these students." Harry finished.

Snape's shoulders slumped, defeated. He glanced around at the positively gleeful looks he was receiving from the Nightmare Dozen. A sudden premonition that would have beaten any of Trelawney's prophecies for accuracy flooded his mind. The expressions of anticipation on the first-year's faces would give him nightmares for a long time to come.

"No, that's it. I can't handle another year. I quit!"

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Well, that's it folks. Hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it.