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Potions was an annoying class. I'd been wrong to be so optimistic. Big friendly boobs had blinded me to the hell that was listening to Snape prattle on about his grudge against Potter. Literally from the moment class started I knew it was going to be a long one.

It didn't help that my shitbag cousin was apparently one of his favorite students, and revelled in rubbing that in everyone's face. He DIDN'T directly call me out, probably because I scared him with my big stunt in Charms. Draco struck me as the kind of cowardly dickhead that only picked fights he knew he could win.

Snape was even now peppering the poor guy with questions he had no reasonable means of answering, though judging by her hopping in her seat Granger did. "What is the difference between Monkshood and Wolfsbane."

"There isn't one." I finally said. Not out of pity for Potter, but because this was a two hour class and there was no way in hell I was spending it listening to Snape play kick the orphan. "I'm pretty curious about the rest of those questions though, professor, could you share the answers with us?" I tried not to be sarcastic. I tried SO HARD. I failed.

His eyes snapped to me, and I saw them narrow, but then they filled with an odd expression. Something like…pain. "Mr. Black." He murmured. His voice sounded conflicted and a bit strained. "Your curiosity does you credit. But perhaps you might deign to raise your hand in the future when you speak in my class."

I debated not responding to that to be a dick, but this guy was in charge of my house, and he COULD make my life difficult if he wanted to. I nodded sharply and he relaxed. His eyes scanned over Potter again, but he seemed to decide it wasn't worth it.

Turning to the board behind him, he whipped out a piece of chalk and began scribbling. "Today." He said sharply. "You will brew your first potion. Take note that there will be no silly wandwaving or shouting of incantations. Potion brewing is an art that requires patience, precision, and a singular focus."

As he spoke, he wrote a series of steps. Despite it mostly covering the instructions I pulled out my potions book to compare it to the writing on the board. Most of the broad strokes were there, but there was lots of subtext and notes for the potion in the book. My mom had been very clear that potions teachers told you WHAT to do, and not why. Not knowing the reasoning could completely throw off the results on the off chance that adjustments were required.

As I suspected, there were a few notes on the process that required an extra step to properly account for things like altitude and materials at hand (cauldrons weren't supplied, we brought them from home, and not all of them were the same). The addition of nettles, the timing of

taking the cauldron off the fire before adding the porcupine quills. Just little stuff that could affect the outcome when brewing.

Honestly, the entire thing was fascinating. I let myself get lost in the reading, and combined with what my mom had taught me I actually understood a bit of what was going on.

Potion brewing, contrary to some people's first impressions, IS a magical art. While Snape had been right that there was no wand waving in potions, the wand was a critical part of the process regardless.

When creating a potion, one would stir the cauldron with the wand, effectively injecting magic into the base being used. Despite that, there was no spells involved at all, and in fact, the magic wasn't being cast so much as infused into the ingredients. The base acted as a foundation, then as magic was infused would take on a neutral magical property.

As magic was infused alongside each ingredient, it would bind to the magical structure of the materials used, being shaped by the magic inherent in the material. That structure of the magic in a plant was different than the structure of the magic in a CHUNK of a plant, even if only slightly.

While that might not seem important, potions were complex and nuanced constructs built by synergizing dozens of these bits of magic, slowly altering the foundation provided by the base as each new bit of mystical flavoring was added until the potion reached its final state.

That was why each step was important and had to be meticulously followed according to the internal structure of the potion. It was ALSO why potions masters could make adjustments to formuli to create a more streamlined version. While following basic instructions would most likely give you the approximate result you wanted, every magical plant and reagent was SLIGHTLY different, meaning that the optimal configuration would vary as well.

Of course, potions weren't all or nothing. You could make weaker or stronger versions, and as long as you follow the instructions you would end up with a workable product most of the time. I was, of course, nowhere near suited enough or skilled enough to detect any of those imperceptible differences in the magic, not practiced enough to have anything to compare them too, but I did my best to feel for the power in the potion as I worked.

As I followed the instructions, I stirred the cauldron as we'd been told, and I had to grimace at how fucking HARD it was. My untamed and powerful magic could be whipped into shape, and I'd learned to do so, but potions, being so exacting and meticulous, was not an art that benefitted from overpowering your spells.

Mom had forced me to brew non stop every night until I was able to output a consistent and manageable level of magic during brewing, and only being taught by someone who was essentially a master had let me manage it.

Slowly allowing the magic to harmonize with the ingredients as I worked was harder than any spell, and even having the directions right there and reading the notes on each step, I was barely able to pull it off. Which was just…amazing. I loved brewing. It was the one part of magic I felt like I needed to earn. Not that I disliked being good at spells or being strong, but it felt awesome to know I had the brains to be good at magic, to prove it by excelling in a subject I was so unsuited for.

The whole thing was fascinating, and I followed the steps meticulously, grinding the six snake fangs in my mortar, taking the cauldron off the fire, adding the dried nettles and the horned slugs. One of the other students, a tall pudgy guy with the unfortunate name Longbottom, apparently fucked something up, and his potion melted a hole through his cauldron and spilled all over him.

I wondered if he hadn't followed the directions or if the magic he'd been imbuing had been uneven. Maybe something was wrong with his wand. Regardless, my potion turned out fine, and pink smoke began to billow up from it at the exact right time.

Blaise, my partner, who hadn't spoken to me after I shushed him at the start of the brew, raised an eyebrow at me, and I pulled out a vial, filling it with a small ladle and bringing it up for the both of us to the professor's desk.

Presenting it to him, I made sure to keep my expression neutral. He took the vial, letting the pink smoke waft up past his face so he could see it, then checking the shade and consistency. "Well done, Mr. Black." He said quietly. I felt a flare of magic as he flicked his wand, though I wasn't sure exactly what he'd done.

Whatever it was, it seemed to hide our conversation from everyone else. "Thanks professor. My mother's been tutoring me for a short while. She was a potions major."

He snorted. "I am well aware of Sylvie Randall's gift for brewing. We were contemporaries at this very university." He stared at me intently. "I was also acquainted with your father. Regulus and I were only a year or two apart and both in Slytherin. Your uncle, damn his soul to the fiery abyss, inflicted his particular brand of terror on me regularly. Regulus helped curb the worst of his brother's ire when he could. You look very much like him."

I knew that. Having seen the portrait I was well aware my dad and I could have been twins when viewed at the same age. That did explain his reticence to punish me for speaking up earlier. It had seemed out of character even in the short time I'd known him. He didn't seem like the type to put up with bullshit.

"About earlier, professor…" I said tentatively. "I didn't mean to interject, I just felt we were getting…off track." No use not at least making excuses. If the guy wanted to like me why not let him, it would make my life easier.

Grimacing, he nodded. “I suppose. Potter clearly lets his fame go to his head, but my more academically inclined students shouldn’t suffer for his fame-seeking.” I resisted the urge to look at the pale tired looking orphan, who couldn’t try less hard to get attention if he was invisible. Dude was basically furniture.

If the teacher wanted to talk shit though that wasn’t my business, so I just nodded along, thanking him, getting my grade, and then heading back to where Blaise sat at my table. He raised a brow. “What was that all about? I tried to listen in but I only heard some buzzing.”

I shrugged. “Nothing big, he knew my old man. Guess they were buds back in the day. I’m glad mom told me that I could skip the line by bringing up a vial. He’s about to go around and grade, and I’m guessing he’ll be harder on people after he’s seen a dozen of the damned things. We got an O, which according to the backward ass grading system here is the highest.”

He snickered at that. “Fair enough. You gonna try to chat up Brown again? She seemed to take to you well enough.”

“Nah.” I said casually. “Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Plus she’s a Gryffindor and I don’t want to give Snape a reason to start disliking me beyond the one he already overlooked. I’ll catch her later. Besides, I have plans for tonight.”

His expression closed off as he realized what I meant. “You’re going to try to get that saliva TONIGHT?” He sounded worried, but I just smirked and waved him off.

“Yes. I am.” I said confidently. “Don’t worry so much, I’ll be fine. I’ve got a plan.” I didn’t, but I also didn’t need one. I could cast a stunning spell and a shield, both of which were abnormally powerful when I put my back into it. Plus I had super strength, and I could fly. I could handle a big ass dog, three heads or not.

Sighing, he just nodded. “Fine. But be careful.” He shot a glance at the ice eyed blonde who was watching us carefully. “If I get you killed Greengrass will turn me inside out. She seems almost attached.” I winked at her, and she rolled her eyes, looking away, but Blaise poked my arm. “And I’d be pretty upset too. So don’t die.”

He looked me in the eye when he said it, and I grinned at the seriousness. It was nice to know someone cared. Even two someones. “Fine.” I said with exasperation. “I’ll take it slow. I promise.” Not like taking my time was that much of an imposition. He seemed to relax a bit and I leaned back, looking around to see everyone was done. “So do you think we’re going to do a second potion? Because otherwise this class is going to be unbearably long.”