

The Art of Dark Magic

When Neville opened his eyes, he sat up in his bed to realize that it wasn't a dream. There really were only three of them in the dormitory. Seamus had settled next to him, and a boy who had joined their dorm, Andrew Li, had taken a bed a bit farther away.

The night before, Neville had met Andrew, a tall boy built like an athlete, whom the girls had immediately bombarded with questions about his background and the reason for his absence from Hogwarts all these years.

Andrew, who preferred to be called An, was of Asian descent. According to what he had told Neville during the feast, his parents had met at the Ministry of Magic in Beijing and had decided to travel around the world so their children could experience different cultures.

“My family comes from the circus,” he had told him. “My sisters and I spent our lives traveling the world.”

An had received his letter of acceptance from Hogwarts, and his parents had no choice but to allow him to attend the school. His sisters were too old to go, so An attended alone.

The three boys dressed quickly and hurried down the stairs to reach the Great Hall for breakfast before their first class, which was set to begin in less than half an hour.

“What's our first class today?” Neville asked.

“We have a double Charms class before moving on to Defense Against the Dark Arts,” An read from his schedule.

Seamus grimaced.

“I'm curious to see how this year's lessons will go. After a year with Snape, I doubt it could get any worse.”

Neville frowned.

“I have to say...” he began.



Seamus turned so quickly he knocked over his glass of pumpkin juice.

“You’re not about to tell me you enjoyed his classes, are you?”

Neville shrugged.

“Honestly, can you name a more competent teacher we’ve had? In our first year, we had a traitor hiding You-Know-Who. In our second year, a fraud who claimed he had fought every creature imaginable who ended up with memory loss...”

“In third year, we had Professor Lupin,” Seamus interjected.

Neville nodded.

“A great teacher who turned out to be a werewolf, so he couldn’t stay.”

“And in fourth year, we had Professor Moody,” Seamus added.

“A Death Eater who hid behind the identity of a mad ex-Auror and sent Harry to a graveyard to resurrect You-Know-Who.”

He paused before continuing.

“Shall I go on?”

Seamus didn’t say anything. He just poked at his scrambled eggs.

“And what about fifth year?” An pressed.

Neville turned to him, eyebrows raised.

“Well, yeah, you’ve talked about all your teachers except for the one in fifth year. What was that one like?”

Neville and Seamus exchanged a grim look.

“Her name was Dolores Umbridge,” Ginny said, joining them at the Gryffindor table. “She was an old woman who looked like a toad and went after anyone who said Voldemort was back.”

Neville shivered. Seamus choked on his pumpkin juice, and An's eyes widened.

“Don’t say his name,” Neville hissed, glancing around nervously.

Ginny spooned a mouthful of cereal, fixing her gaze on the boys.

"I'm not afraid of him," she said before taking another spoonful.

"You should be," came a stern voice.

The Gryffindor students turned to see the tall figure of Professor McGonagall, staring at them over her square-shaped glasses.



"I don't want to hear any of you utter that name again. The next person who disobeys will lose fifty points for their house."

The four students' eyes widened in shock.

"I know the punishment might seem hard to accept, but if that's the price to pay to stop you from making this kind of mistake, I'm prepared to let the House Cup go to Slytherin."

Ginny wanted to respond, but Professor McGonagall's sharp gaze stopped her.

The arrival of the headmaster ended their conversation.

"Is there a problem with these students, Professor McGonagall?"

She eyed him as if addressing a pest.

"Absolutely not, Headmaster," she replied.

She turned back to the Gryffindors. "Now, off to class, all of you!"

Neville and his friends quickly gathered their belongings and rushed to Charms class before Snape could give them detention. Ginny waved them off and headed to Herbology, where she would join the Hufflepuffs.

Neville, Seamus, and An met up with their classmates. They sat at a table away from the Ravenclaws, who were sharing the class with them, and started working on the Disillusionment Charm.

Professor Flitwick, the tiny Charms teacher, stood on a stack of books, waving his wand like a conductor to demonstrate the spell to his students.

He called one of the students up to make a demonstration in front of the class. With a light tap of his wand on the girl's head, a strange transparent substance started to flow from her scalp down to the tips of her shoes.

Within moments, the girl had completely disappeared.

"This is how the Disillusionment Charm works," Flitwick said in his high-pitched voice. "If you manage to cast it properly, you'll become invisible to anyone. Some powerful wizards can remain unnoticed even to trained eyes."

There was a moment of respectful silence in the room before Parvati Patil raised her hand.

"And you, Professor? Can you do it?"

Flitwick smiled.

"I propose a little game."



He twirled his wand before tapping his own head and disappearing.

"The first person to find me will win ten points for their house."

Every student jumped to their feet and started searching the room. They lifted cushions, looked everywhere to find the tiny Charms professor.

Some students opened every cabinet door, while others even left the classroom, thinking the professor might have hidden in the hallway.

A small group of Ravenclaws stayed seated in the middle of the room, sitting cross-legged on cushions, debating possible hiding spots the professor might have chosen and what spell they could use to reveal him.

Neville wasn't very invested in the lesson. He was staring out the window, beyond the grounds and the mountains surrounding them. He was thinking about his friends who had fled the school and were hiding somewhere.

"Aren't you going to help us search instead of doing nothing?" Seamus snapped, flipping over cushions all over the room.

An had lit the tip of his wand and was searching for reflections that might give away where the professor was hiding.

Neville snapped out of his thoughts and followed his friends.

After about twenty minutes, Padma, Parvati's twin, shouted, "I found him!"

There were some grumbles and a few fair-play claps when the other students saw her holding the sleeve of the professor, who barely reached her waist.

"Congratulations, Miss Patil!" he exclaimed. "You had a brilliant idea by using the Human Resence-Revealing Spell. It's the best counter-charm to the effects of the Disillusionment Charm."

He was interrupted by the bell signaling the end of class. As the students packed up their belongings, he assigned them homework to practice the Disillusionment Charm for the next lesson.

Neville and the Gryffindors left the Charms classroom and headed to their first Defense Against the Dark Arts lesson, where Professor Carrow and the Slytherins were already waiting.

Neville was unpleasantly surprised to find Crabbe and Goyle, who hadn't passed their OWLs, and whom he hadn't seen since the end of their fifth year.

"Come in," Carrow invited them in a soft voice.



The Gryffindors sat next to the Slytherins, who didn't acknowledge them, except for one student sitting in the middle of the group whom Neville had never seen before.

"Do you think he's a new student?" he whispered to Seamus, nodding slightly toward the boy.

Seamus leaned forward to get a look at the boy Neville was talking about and saw a thin, lanky boy with tanned skin, pale green eyes, and nearly white-blond hair.

"I think I saw him during the Sorting Ceremony," Seamus replied. "I think his name is Alius or Altrus."

"Altrus?" Neville said, surprised. "Are you sure?"

He turned around from the seat he was sharing with a Gryffindor girl named Linda Bennett.

"I think his name is Attilius. He arrived at the same time as me and the grandson of Newt Scamander."

The boys' eyes widened. They wanted to respond, but a flash of white light singed the table right between them.

They looked up to see the professor, his wand pointed directly at them.

"As I was saying to those of you who were listening," Carrow began, "this year will be different from your previous years. For those who are new, I'll clarify a few points so that we can begin the year under the best conditions."

He paused for a long silence before continuing.

"As you may have noticed, the school's administration has taken an unexpected turn this year for some of the faculty. The late Professor Dumbledore has been replaced by Headmaster Snape, who has decided to enforce the Ministry of Magic's directives more rigorously than his predecessor."

Neville was about to speak when a second flash of white light hit the same spot on the table.

"I would ask that you do not interrupt me while I'm speaking," Carrow said, his tone sharper.

Neville gripped his wand for a moment, but Seamus's elbow in his ribs dissuaded him.



Professor Carrow slowly nodded, as if to confirm that Neville had made the right choice.

"As I was saying, this year, Defense Against the Dark Arts classes will take a new direction."

He flicked his wand toward the blackboard, where letters appeared in chalk.

"This year, we will focus on the study of Dark Magic and its benefits."

A long silence settled over the room, interrupted only by the snickers and visible glee on the faces of Crabbe and Goyle, who were sitting in the front row.

Neville couldn't believe what he was hearing. He couldn't fathom that lessons meant to prepare them to face Dark wizards would be replaced by teachings on how to mimic them.

Amid the murmurs that filled the room, Professor Carrow raised his wand toward the ceiling and unleashed a loud bang, silencing the entire class.

"Know this," he said, walking between the tables, his wand sweeping from one student to the next, "I am not reluctant to use my wand to restore order in my class. If you don't follow the rules I set, I will have no hesitation in using it against you."

The whole class fell silent. No one moved, except for one boy who raised his hand to speak.

"Yes, Mr. ...?"

"Malkin, Professor," replied Attilius. "I wanted to know which curses the Ministry has allowed you to teach us?"

Amycus Carrow smiled, revealing his yellowed teeth. He approached Attilius' desk, staring him down, his face so close that the student could smell his unpleasant breath.

"The Ministry has given me free rein to train you. You will learn everything there is to know about the secret arts of Dark Magic."

A shiver ran through the class. Attilius shot a dark look at Crabbe and Goyle, who seemed barely able to contain their excitement.

"Another thing to note," he continued, picking up the textbook in front of Attilius, "I don't rely on what your books say."



With a flick of his wand, he reduced the textbook to dust that settled over his desk. Attilius looked up at his professor, who stared back at him with a menacing expression.

“Just because you were sent here by the Dark Lord doesn’t mean I’ll give you special treatment,” he thought.

“Understood,” Attilius replied.

Amycus smiled.

“Perfect! Let’s begin!”

They spent the class taking notes on the origins of Dark Magic, as well as the boundaries established between the magic tolerated by the Magical Community and the magic it condemned.

They reviewed the different Dark Wizards who had left their mark on history, such as Herpo the Foul, who terrorized Greece millennia ago and had discovered how to create creatures as dangerous and powerful as the Basilisk.

“I understand one of them roamed this school for a year,” Carrow joked.

“That’s true”, confirmed Neville. “But it was eventually slain by Harry Potter with the Sword of Gryffindor.”

The mention of Harry's name froze the professor in a curious posture. He turned his head toward Neville like an automaton.

“Ten points from Gryffindor”, he announced.

All the members of the House cried out in unison, but the professor once again raised his wand toward the ceiling, causing another loud bang that silenced the room.

“I do not tolerate any backtalk in my class. Let it be known that the mention of that individual’s name is forbidden in this classroom as well as in this school.”

He stared down all the students.

“I forbid you from mentioning his name under penalty of punishment.”

Neville wanted to speak again, but another nudge from Seamus in his ribs stopped him.

“I see the message has been understood”, he said sharply.



He resumed his explanation on the magical creation of dangerous creatures, briefly mentioning other names that had shaped the wizarding world over the centuries.

He concluded his lesson by discussing Salazar Slytherin, who had joined forces with the other three founders of Hogwarts to establish the school. Unlike his peers, he was not transparent about his desire to create a school of magic. He was renowned among the wizards of his time for his quest for new spells and other magical methods to enhance his abilities and gain power over Muggles, something his friend Gryffindor strongly disapproved of.

“Let it be known that the Chamber of Secrets is not the only creation of Salazar Slytherin”, said Professor Carrow. “According to legends passed down through the castle walls, there are other hidden rooms and secret chambers that the founder concealed from the other founders to continue his research and empower wizards.”

He finished his statement by approaching Attilius and locking eyes with him. The boy listened without faltering and remained seated for a few moments after the bell rang, while the other students packed their things to head to the next class.

Within minutes, they found themselves alone in the classroom, and Attilius could finally speak freely without worrying about eavesdroppers.

He rose from his chair and extended his hand toward the door, which slammed shut.

“I think something has escaped your notice when the Dark Lord entrusted me with this mission”, he said.

Amycus looked at him without understanding.

“It's my job to uncover the secrets of Longbottom's group and his little Gryffindor friends”, he insisted. “You, you're just here to occupy the professor's post and prevent them from learning how to defend themselves against us.”

He emphasized each word by poking his finger into the chest of the Death Eater, who stared back at him with a sullen look.

“I think there's something you haven't understood, kid”, he replied. “The Dark Lord assigns missions to each of his faithful followers as he sees fit.”

He paused before continuing.



“If the Dark Lord gave you this mission, it's only because your father holds an important position at the Ministry, and it would cost him more to replace him than to keep him under control.”

Attilius smiled.

“I’m fully aware that my father is just a puppet in the Dark Lord’s plan, but he needs to understand that I am not him, and I’m not afraid to stand up to him.”

With a swift motion, Attilius bound the Death Eater's feet and pulled him down, causing him to tumble. No sooner had he fallen that Attilius pounced on him, grabbing his throat with one hand to hold him down, while green sparks crackled between the fingers of his other hand.

“Don’t forget, I don’t need my wand to finish you and your sister off”, he growled through gritted teeth.

As if on cue, Alecto Carrow, a small, stocky woman with black hair and eyes as dark and dry as her brother’s, opened the classroom door and found the two men in a compromising position.

She plunged her hand into her robe pocket and drew out a long wand, pointing it at Attilius as she cried, “Relashio!”

Attilius was thrown back several meters, allowing Amycus to free himself. He stood up and joined his sister, both now pointing their wands at the Slytherin.

“Two against one? Finally, a real challenge”, he smiled sinisterly.

With a quick flick of his wrist, his wand shot out from his sleeve, and he launched a barrage of spells at the two Death Eaters, who struggled to deflect the young man's relentless attacks.

He used both his wand and his free hand to hurl chairs and tables at the brother and sister, limiting their vision and giving them no time to defend themselves.

Their duel created a deafening noise that echoed throughout the entire floor. Students and professors exited their classrooms to understand what could be causing such a commotion.

Someone eventually opened the classroom door, and a thick cloud of dust billowed out into the hallway.

“Evanesco!” exclaimed Professor McGonagall.

The dust vanished, revealing three figures covered in debris, all pointing their wands at each other.



“What is going on here?!” she cried. “How dare you duel with a student? Two against one, no less?!”

With a flick of her wrist, she separated Attilius from the Carrows and pulled him closer to her.

“I demand to know what happened here!” she insisted.

Amycus helped his sister to her feet before responding.

“This is none of your business! I deal with my students as I see fit.”

McGonagall disarmed them with a single gesture and bound them with a binding curse.

“We welcomed you into this school because it was the Ministry’s will to appoint you as professors. But know that, in my eyes, you do not deserve that title, and as long as I am present in this school, neither of you will lay a hand on one of my students.”

Attilius was surprised by the intensity of the exchange between Professor McGonagall and the Carrows. Even though it was only his first day, she had already come to his defense before he had even set foot in one of her classes.

“What is going on here?” came the deep, cold voice of Professor Snape, who had just parted the crowd to step into his former classroom.

He cast a sweeping gaze over the Carrows, McGonagall, and Attilius, instantly understanding the cause of the dispute.

“Professor McGonagall, would you kindly allow me to handle this matter and return to your classes?”

She looked as though she wanted to respond, but his gaze stopped her. She left the room, urging the other students and teachers to do the same.

In a matter of seconds, only the three combatants and the headmaster of the school remained in the classroom.

Alecto made to speak, but Snape raised a hand to stop her. He drew his wand and cast a Muffliato Charm on the door.

“Are you all completely insane? It's barely been a day, and you're already at each other's throats.”

Alecto tried to respond, but Snape silenced her once more.

“Do you know why the Dark Lord has never entrusted you with any important missions?”



Faced with their embarrassed silence, he continued.

“Because you cannot control yourselves. I don’t approve of the choices some of our allies make, but at the very least, each of them considers the consequences for the rest of us.”

Alecto and Amycus exchanged sheepish glances.

“I’m the one who persuaded the Dark Lord to assign you to this task because I believed you were competent enough to accomplish it without ruining our plans.”

He paused, taking a breath to calm himself.

“Clearly, I was wrong. You are not capable.”

He turned to Attilius.

“You, come with me.”

Snape turned sharply and broke the charm, opening the door and leading the boy out behind him.

They passed through several corridors, descending a staircase to the second floor, where they stopped in front of an extremely ugly stone gargoyle that croaked:

“Password!”

“Lily of the Valley!” said Snape without hesitation.

Attilius was surprised by the choice of password, but he followed the headmaster up the spiral staircase that the stone gargoyle had revealed.

They climbed the winding stairs and reached a hallway leading to a thick wooden door, through which they entered.

Attilius found himself in a circular room with several windows, from one of which golden light poured throughout the office. Despite the warm late-summer weather, the room felt cold. It

was sparsely furnished and had little decoration save for a series of portraits displaying the faces of former headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts.

The young man recognized a few of the portraits, such as the famous Dilys Derwent, a healer at St. Mungo’s Hospital, and Albus Dumbledore, seated behind the headmaster's chair.

“What’s going on, Severus?” asked the high-pitched voice of Phineas Nigellus Black. “Who is this little fool?”



Attilius shot him an indignant look.

“I think the better question is who are you, old man?”

The question amused the onlookers and flustered the former headmaster, who spluttered a string of inaudible insults.

“Brute! Mangy dog! You’re lucky I’m stuck in this portrait, or I would have already set you straight.”

Snape slammed his hand flat on the desk, silencing the room.

“Quiet! All of you! I need peace.”

He turned back to Attilius, who struggled to hide an amused smile.

“As for you, I thought the trust the Dark Lord placed in you would have convinced you to act with more reason. You know very well the conditions that keep your father in his position. So act with a little more restraint next time.”

His smile vanished in an instant. Despite what he had said in front of the Death Eaters, he did care about what could happen to his parents. He lowered his gaze and offered his apologies to the headmaster.

“You are very talented, Mr. Malkin. You know it, and we all know it. However, you fail to understand what your powers entail.”

He paused before continuing.

“It is your exceptional abilities that led the Dark Lord to call upon you. It is your abilities that made your elder brother give your name to carry out the mission once entrusted to the Malfoy family.”

His voice became calmer as he spoke.

“It is your abilities that will allow you to protect your family once the Dark Lord has taken control of the Wizarding World.”

Attilius nodded.

“I understand, Professor. I understand the reason for your anger, but know that I will find it hard to tolerate your little lapdogs.”

Snape nodded in return.

“I will ensure that the Carrows leave you alone so that you can carry out your mission.”

He gave a faint, unconvincing smile.



“Take solace in the fact that your little confrontation will quickly spread throughout the school and win you the favor of your fellow students.”

Attilius returned the smile and took his leave of the headmaster to return to his classes.

“Oh, by the way, Mr. Malkin,” Snape called after him.

Attilius withdrew his hand from the door handle he had just reached and turned back to face his professor.

“You will receive punishment for the disturbance you caused. I’ll inform you once I’ve made up my mind.”

He dismissed him with a wave of his hand before sinking into his chair to face the long list of headmasters and headmistresses who stared at him, whispering among themselves.

“I don’t understand how you managed to endure all those years, Albus.”

The portrait of the former headmaster of Hogwarts gave him a sorrowful look.

“Being the headmaster of Hogwarts is not just a mere role, Severus,” he replied. “You need to realize what it truly means.”

In response, Snape stood from his chair and walked toward one of the windows overlooking the Black Lake, its surface shimmering with golden reflections, where the long tentacle of the giant squid disappeared into its depths.

