

Excerpt from Chapter 15 – Broken glass

When Mr McKinnon opened the door to the greenhouse the next morning to let the class in, Raven had to suppress her laughter. His face and hands were covered with scratches. That aside, their teacher seemed unaffected. He went about as usual, taking their essays from them. He scooped a paper aeroplane from Hunter Graham's cauldron and directed it straight to the wastebasket. Bobby stomped Gene's foot to prevent the girl from bursting out in laughter.

McKinnon placed the essays on his desk and turned to his audience. 'So, comfrey. *Lus na cnámh briste*. Used for a variety of afflictions. Today, we'll be making an ointment called "All Heal". Raven—' he pointed his wand at her, '—why is it called "All Heal"?'

Raven cleared her throat. 'Because "all heal" is one of comfrey's nicknames, sir. It's a very versatile plant.'

'It is, indeed. And so is this ointment.' He picked up a piece of chalk and wrote down the ingredients and instructions. 'You have one and a half hours to gather your ingredients and prepare them correctly. When the bell rings, you may start on the actual potion. Good luck.'

The class spent the next 90 minutes getting the necessary ingredients from the cupboard, measuring the right amounts, and cutting them up according to the instructions. They finished just in time for the bell. The next part of class was spent in utter silence as the students sweated over their cauldrons, biting the tips of their tongues. The comfrey leaves were the last to enter the cauldron. Raven wasn't sure whether she'd crushed them correctly, but when she tipped them over the edge of her cauldron and stirred, the liquid instantly turned from vivid blue to dark green. She turned towards the instructions on the blackboard: 'Simmer for five minutes after change of colour'.

Raven looked around the greenhouse. Gene was sweating profusely; the liquid in her cauldron had turned a bright yellow. A pile of crushed leaves lay on the floor next to her.

She shot Raven a bewildered look. Raven looked from Gene to the floor and back, hoping Gene would notice the leaves that had fallen off her desk. Gene just stared at her.

'Floor!' Raven muttered between her teeth.

Gene immediately dropped down and threw the fallen leaves into her cauldron. The liquid began to hiss dangerously, after which it turned a viscous red. Gene sighed and plopped onto her chair, her arms crossed. Raven smiled apologetically; even if she were allowed to help, she wouldn't know how to fix whatever Gene had done.

Expectedly, Bobby was doing fine. He was staring at the clock above McKinnon's desk, waiting for the five minutes to pass. When they had, both he and Raven gave their potions a quick stir.

The liquid in their cauldrons began to bubble. Raven's eyes turned immediately to the blackboard but was relieved to find that it was supposed to 'bubble lightly'.

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Comment [1]: Specify what's being cut up to differentiate between the solid and liquid ingredients.

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Comment [2]: Do you mean 'vicious'?

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Comment [3]: Perhaps: 'As expected'

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Comment [4]: Here you have a dangling modifier. The subject of the sentence is 'Raven's eyes', so her eyes are what's relieved. You can remedy this either by having Raven do the looking (rather than her eyes), or by adding 'she' after 'but'. If you go for the latter, be sure to add a comma after 'blackboard'.

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After walking between the tables to make sure his students weren't assisting each other, Mr McKinnon returned to his desk.

'By now your potions should be done. If you're carrying a wand and feel comfortable using it, you may try to pour the liquid in the phjal I placed on your desks.'

Without hesitation, the entire class drew their wands.

'Very well,' McKinnon beamed. 'Slow and steady, if you please.'

Raven gripped her wand tightly. Slow and steady.. If only her wand did slow and steady. It preferred sudden moves and dramatic effect. Despite practising every night, she still hadn't gained complete control over it. There was definite improvement, but not enough for Raven to trust it to go slow and steady.

The liquid she'd taken from her cauldron was suspended in mid-air when it happened. A sickening sensation shot through her arm as her wand flung to the right. Her cauldron flew up in the air, dropping its contents around the room, and sped through one of the windows with a deafening sound, hitting a glass cabinet on its way out.

Students dropped to the floor screaming as shards of glass and spilled potion flew around them.

Raven didn't dare move. She heard Mr McKinnon telling the students to calm down.

Someone was whimpering next to her. Slowly, she turned her head. Bobby held up his left hand. A piece of glass the size of a protractor had flown right through it. Blood was dripping steadily onto his desk. Raven felt her head spin.

'Sir?' Her voice sounded hoarse. 'Sir?'

Gene emerged from under her desk. Her eyes bulged as she caught sight of Bobby's hand.

'Oh dear.' Mr McKinnon had reached Bobby's desk. He conjured up a piece of white cloth and bound it loosely around Bobby's hand. Ignoring the continuous whimpering, McKinnon turned to Gene, who looked as white as the cloth spun around Bobby's wounded hand. 'Gene, take him to the infirmary. Now.'

McKinnon turned to address her classmates, who were still down on the floor.

'Class,' he started.

The bell rang, but no one moved. McKinnon took his wand and swept the shards of glass into a pile. With another flick, he collected the spilled liquid and dumped it into the sink at the back of the room. Still looking scared, Raven's classmates rose to their feet and packed their bags.

'Class,' their teacher tried again. 'Check yourself for injuries before you head for lunch. Make sure you have no bruises, cuts, or burns. If you do, go straight to the infirmary. Class dismissed.'

They all hurried out of the building, leaving their full cauldrons behind.

Despite her wand weighing heavy in her lifted hand, Raven still hadn't moved.

'Raven, sit down.'

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Comment [5]: 'vial' is US English.

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Comment [6]: Perhaps: 'jerked'. 'Flung' implies it left her hand.

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Comment [7]: Completely through? Maybe 'into' works better.

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Comment [8]: Technically, 'heavily' is correct, but with fiction there is more flexibility with style.

Raven took care not to make any sudden movements. As slowly as she possibly could, she placed her wand on her desk. She tried to swallow but found that she couldn't. Something was lodged inside her throat.

'Are you all right?' McKinnon took a chair and sat down facing her.

She nodded.

'Are you hurt? Does your cheek hurt?' He took her chin in his hand and turned her head.

'My cheek?' She touched the side of her face. Her fingers came away wet with blood.

'The cut's not deep, but you must let the nurses have a look. You don't want that pretty face scarred, do you?' He dropped a wink. 'Here, let me stop the bleeding.'

He lifted his wand and a small bottle flew towards them from the cupboard, together with a pressed, white cloth. He put some lotion on the cloth, then dabbed Raven's cheek. She flinched; the lotion stung.

'There you go. Be careful next time, will you? You don't have to use your wand.' He stood up and returned to his desk.

Raven got to her feet and lowered her wand into her bag with care. She turned to leave the room and took in the mess she had caused. The cabinet doors were shattered, as was the tall window. The borders surrounding the greenhouse were covered with glass. Her cauldron had made it all the way to the hedge.

She glanced at McKinnon, stunned she hadn't received any kind of reprimand, and left the building before he could change his mind.

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**Comment [9]:** all right= two words

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**Comment [10]:** 'dabbed' is US English.

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