

# The Bravest Man I've Ever Known

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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'Welcome everyone,' Arthur Weasley said. 'I thank you all for coming. Have a seat.'

It was almost exactly a year ago that they had celebrated Bill and Fleur's wedding there in the Weasleys' garden, and he could see many familiar faces. But there were some faces that he would never see again. Too many good friends had died since last summer. Children, husbands, wives, all wiped out, lost forever. And that was why they were all gathered in his garden today. They had come to say goodbye.

Two months had passed since the final battle. Two months filled with tears and ashes. The dead were all buried by now, and Hogwarts was about to be rebuilt. And they were all standing at the doorstep to a new era. Yes, no better time to take farewell than this.

Shacklebolt spoke about Moody. He spoke about bravery and courage.

Hermione spoke about Dobby, the brave little elf who had died with Harry Potter's name on his lips.

Ginny spoke about Tonks, who had always made her laugh.

Neville spoke about Lupin, the kindest teacher he had ever known.

And George, of course, spoke about his beloved brother Fred, about mischief and fireworks.

And they all raised their goblets and drank to honour the fallen.

Silence settled over the garden. They were all lost in their own thoughts. They all had their own memories of the dead, some of which were too precious to ever be shared with anyone.

And then Harry Potter rose from his chair: 'I think we have forgotten someone.'

Everybody turned to look at the boy.

'I would like to talk about the man without whom I would not be here today. I would like to talk about Severus Snape.'

He raised his goblet and looked towards the sky.

'You have never been a pleasant man, Severus Snape. You've made my life a living hell for six long years. And I hated you just as much as you seemed to hate me. But I had no idea that all along, you were just trying to make amends, that you were just trying to help.

'I had no idea how much you had sacrificed, how much you had risked, how much you had suffered. But you have succeeded, Severus Snape. With your dying breath you gave me the tools I needed to carry out my task. Without you, I would not have made it. And none of us would be here today.

'That's why I want to thank you, Severus Snape. And I hope that you, wherever you are, accept my apology.'

Along with everyone else in the garden, Harry Potter toasted towards the setting sun. And somewhere up there, Severus Snape smirked.