



"I haven't eaten for nearly five hundred years," said the ghost. "I don't need to, of course, but one does miss it. I don't think I've introduced myself? Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington at your service. Resident ghost of Gryffindor Tower."

"I know who you are!" said Ron suddenly. "My brothers told me about you — you're Nearly Headless Nick!"

"I would *prefer* you to call me Sir Nicholas de Mimsy —" the ghost began stiffly, but sandy-haired Seamus Finnigan interrupted.

"*Nearly* Headless? How can you be *nearly* headless?"

Sir Nicholas looked extremely miffed, as if their little chat wasn't going at all the way he wanted.

"Like *this*," he said irritably. He seized his left ear and pulled. His whole head swung off his neck and fell onto his shoulder as if it was on a hinge. Someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly. Looking pleased at the stunned looks on their faces, Nearly Headless Nick flipped his head back onto his neck, coughed, and said, "So — new Gryffindors! I hope you're going to help us win the House Championship this year? Gryffindors have never gone so long without winning. Slytherins have got the cup six years in a row! The Bloody Baron's becoming almost unbearable — he's the Slytherin ghost."

Harry looked over at the Slytherin table and saw a horrible ghost sitting there, with blank staring eyes, a gaunt face, and robes stained with silver blood. He was right next to Malfoy who, Harry was pleased to see, didn't look too pleased with the seating arrangements.

"How did he get covered in blood?" asked Seamus with great interest.

"I've never asked," said Nearly Headless Nick delicately.