

“Neville—“ Harry broke off when his friend fixed him with a stubborn glare. “Ugh. Fine. But if your Gran murders me for getting you fucking expelled or something, I’m blaming you.”

Neville paled slightly at the possibility, but nodded anyway. Bloody Gryffindors.

Before they left, Harry reached out to the magic of the room, and felt it change — it grew smaller, the four house doors disappeared, and soon they were stood in a cosy room with a pair of sofas and a table in the middle. The mirror wall disappeared entirely, taking their little message board safely with it. “Just in case she comes in to check,” Harry pointed out at Neville’s astonished look.

“I didn’t realise the room worked like that,” Neville murmured. Harry shrugged. It did for him, at any rate.

Heartbeat a hard staccato against his ribcage, Harry headed for the door, wand still in hand. Neville was right behind him. Harry pushed open the door, stepped outside — and immediately ducked a bright red jet of light. “He’s here!” a shout rang through the corridor, and suddenly there were spells firing at him from multiple sources. Harry put up a Shield charm, blocking most of them, but he knew he needed to let himself be overwhelmed — and he didn’t want Umbridge knowing just how capable he was in a fight.

Still, he quite happily disarmed the Slytherin student in front of him. He tried to run, and let himself be hit with a Tripping jinx, skidding across the stone floor. In an instant, there was a knee pressed to his back, and his hands were bound. “I’ve got Potter!” It sounded like Montague, the quidditch captain. Harry craned his neck, trying to see if Neville had managed to escape. Unfortunately, the other Gryffindor was lying Stunned on the floor only a few feet away.

“Well done, Mr Montague! And you, Mr Malfoy. Twenty points each!” Umbridge cooed in delight. Harry tensed when Montague pulled him roughly to his feet, setting him face to face with the pink-clad High Inquisitor. Umbridge looked like she had just been declared Minister for Magic herself.

Behind her, with the faintest trace of apology in his eyes, Draco had hold of a bound Neville.

“You, Mr Potter, are in very deep trouble,” Umbridge declared, sounding very, very happy about that.

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For the second time that school year, Harry found himself riding the revolving staircase up to the headmaster’s office. This time was about as cheerful as the last, though the company was different. It was just him and Umbridge, her stubby fingers gripping him tightly by the shoulder — she had let Neville go with a week’s detention, and sent the Slytherins on their way to see if they couldn’t find any more suspicious-looking students. She had checked the inside of the room, but still seemed convinced Harry was hiding something.

When they reached the office, Harry’s heart stuttered — the Minister himself was already there, with a smiling Percy Weasley and a pair of aurors, stood close to Dumbledore with