

facing the wrong way!” Immediately, the stones in all four house point hourglasses began to fly upwards. Slytherin lost fewer than the rest, but the other three houses were so even it made little difference to the overall scores. Umbridge stormed down the aisle between Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, careful not to trip over the legs of all the students sat incorrectly, until she was stood in front of Cho. “Detention, Miss Chang. My office, five o’clock this evening.”

Cho’s eyes hardened. “Yes, Professor,” she replied, smiling unrepentantly. Umbridge huffed, and kept walking, all the way out of the Great Hall.

A flood of excited murmurs started up, even as people swung their legs back over the benches to sit properly. They were all wide-eyed and grinning, flushed with exhilaration.

To them, it felt like a victory. But Harry’s eyes were on Cho, being congratulated by Patrick for her ballsy move, and his stomach felt like it was full of lead.

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Harry waited outside Umbridge’s office that night, under the invisibility cloak, watching the door with anger in his blood. Cho had entered at five on the dot, and it was eight, now.

Thankfully, by half past the door opened; Cho walked out, cradling her right hand, cheeks flushed but no tears in her eyes. As soon as the door shut behind her, Harry stuffed the cloak in his bag and stepped from the shadows, calling her name softly. She jumped, whipping around.

“Harry.” Her eyes went wide, her lower lip trembling. “Harry, she—“

“I know,” he said softly, sympathetic. “Come here.” He reached gently for her hand, first doing the Healing charm Snape had taught him, then the spell to drain the magic. After only one detention, the words were faint, but Harry could just about make them out.

*I will not be disruptive.*

“I’ll teach you the spells tomorrow, if you come find me,” he promised. “In case she gets you again. Or anyone else.”

“She did that to you, too? Every night?” Cho looked utterly horrified, and Harry attempted a reassuring smile.

“I’ve had worse. Look, see, it’s basically healed.” He showed her the back of his hand, where the words *I must not tell lies* stood out pale pink against his dark skin.

“That’s awful,” Cho breathed. “She just sat there, watching me cut myself over and over — I tried not to cry, I didn’t want to give her the satisfaction, I—“ The dam broke, and with a quiet sob, tears began to spill from her brown eyes. Harry pulled her into a tight hug, letting her cry on his shoulder.

“You did so well,” he soothed. “Brave as a Gryffindor, you are.” That earned a weak laugh. Eventually, she pulled back, wiping her face with the sleeve of her jumper.