

“I study with Neville and Ginny in the common room,” Harry answered, keeping his tone even. “And sometimes I do homework with my other yearmates in the library.”

“That’s not what I meant and you know it!” Umbridge hissed, wild-eyed in her anger. “Let’s try another question — where is the criminal Sirius Black?”

Harry didn’t even need to bother lying about that one; before he could open his mouth, a huge explosion rocked the castle. The colour drained from Umbridge’s face, and she shot to her feet.

The sound of screams began to echo through the castle. For one horrified moment, Harry wondered if Death Eaters had attacked, taking Dumbledore’s absence as a sign of weakness.

“Back to lunch, Potter!” Umbridge yelled, already hurrying from the office. Harry gave her a small head start, then left after her, wand in hand. It soon became all too clear what the source of the chaos was.

There were fireworks *everywhere*. By the time Harry reached the top of the main staircase, there was a riot of sparks in all colours and shapes filling the air; huge dragons made of coloured fire that roared as they shot off smaller fireworks; whizzing Catherine wheels screeching as they spun through the air; rockets trailing sparks as they soared higher through the castle. It was an endless supply, all originating from the Entrance Hall, and Harry had a very good idea who had done it.

The fireworks lasted through the entire rest of the day — thanks largely in part to the array of spells on them that had them multiplying or changing shape whenever anyone tried to vanish them.

And, of course, thanks to the rest of the staff, who seemed largely unconcerned by the displays. And with all the Educational Decrees about what was within their proper *authority* to handle, many of them seemed perfectly happy to summon Umbridge whenever they came across a firework, rather than disposing of it themselves. In Transfiguration, Harry had to bite his lip to keep from laughing as McGonagall continued to teach despite the purple dragon shooting around the classroom, which she had sent Lavender to go alert Umbridge of. The sweaty, soot-blackened headmistress appeared and raised her wand feebly, clearly exhausted from the whole affair.

Everyone was talking about it at dinner, and everyone seemed to know who the culprits were. Not that Fred and George were really trying to hide it, promising that their full line of fireworks would be for sale in the summer, and people could pre-order now.

A hush fell over the hall when the headmistress finally staggered in, her lurid pink robe slightly charred at the edges, her hair entirely in disarray. “Weasley! Weasley!” she called, and four heads of red hair popped up at the Gryffindor table. “Not you two,” she snapped dismissively at Ginny and Ron.

“Can we help you, Headmistress?” Fred asked politely, eyes dancing. A vein in Umbridge’s temple pulsed.