

Hermione, bragging about his new authority. Around the Gryffindor table, several members of the HA were giving Harry intent looks, as if asking him to explain the Slytherin's supposed *loyalty* now. Harry just shook his head — surely they understood such things were necessary sometimes?

Harry wasn't surprised by which Slytherins appeared to be in the Inquisitorial Squad — or the handful of Ravenclaws, too — but he was quietly pleased to see how many of them were secretly his own allies.

The Ministry was not as stable or respected as Fudge and Umbridge thought.

He kept his head down for the whole day, glad he didn't have Defence Against the Dark Arts on his schedule yet. Every time he saw Umbridge, she looked like she was trying to set him on fire with her mind.

It was Neville's turn for detention first, so Harry went up to Gryffindor Tower, intent on doing as much homework as he could before his evenings were once again limited. Almost as soon as he sat down, a tall redhead appeared on either side of him.

"Hey, mate, question for you," Fred asked in a low tone. Harry instinctively raised a privacy ward.

"What's up?"

"You know how you've been self-studying for those two OWLs?" George asked, making Harry blink; that was not what he'd anticipated. "Do you know anything about registering for exams at the Ministry?"

Suddenly, things clicked. "You don't think you'll stick around for your NEWTs?" he asked with raised eyebrows. The twins shared a look.

"With Umbridge in charge? Not likely," George remarked. "We're close to getting premises for the shop, too, but that's all hush-hush."

"It will be a help to have qualifications, though," Fred said. "And we've already put all the work into studying for them. Might as well try it."

"There are all sorts of potions ingredients you can only access if you've got a NEWT in the subject," George explained. "We didn't give a shit about OWLs because they don't really mean anything, but NEWTs are important."

Harry knew they'd only passed three OWLs each, but he also knew that half their professors had let them continue their classes even in the subjects they'd failed, knowing it was not through lack of skill. The twins were two of the most talented students in the entire school.

"I don't know anything, but I have ways of getting letters out to Remus. I'll ask him," Harry assured, earning twin grins. "How soon d'you think you'll be off?"

Again, they shared a look over his head. "Depends how the next few weeks go," Fred admitted, frowning. "We'd like to stay til after the match against Ravenclaw. But we also