

*patronise them* so completely. He couldn't let her get away with spewing her Ministry bullshit; more than that, he couldn't let people think he in any way *supported it*.

"Hand, Mr Potter!" she barked, and Harry flung his hand in the air.

"Are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Professor Umbridge?" he repeated with false innocence. "Only, I thought for sure you were the Undersecretary to the Minister. I'd really love to hear about your teaching qualifications."

Someone sniggered from the back of the classroom. It might have been Pansy Parkinson. Umbridge scowled.

"*Senior* Undersecretary, Mr Potter," she corrected pointedly. "And I do not believe it is your place to question my teaching ability. Minister Fudge and the Department of Magical Education have appointed me to this role, and that is all you need to know. *Furthermore*, my curriculum has been designed by the Ministry's best and brightest minds in education, and is guaranteed to correct the erroneous and downright *irresponsible* teaching you have previously suffered under."

Harry's hand was still in the air. "And we're supposed to pass our OWLs without ever having performed the spells we're to use in the exams, are we?"

"With a firm enough understanding of the theory, you will all be perfectly capable of performing the necessary spells under controlled exam conditions," Umbridge assured, her smile turning vicious.

"And Merlin forbid we ever need to use those spells again in our lifetime, in *non exam conditions*," Harry retorted. Umbridge's beady eyes narrowed.

"What use would you have for those spells once you leave this school, Mr Potter?" She gave a girlish giggle. "You speak as if you expect to be *attacked* the moment you step foot outside the castle!"

Harry clenched his jaw; so this was her angle, was it? He should have known. She was here to discredit him, to goad him into shouting about Voldemort's return so she could call him a lunatic and make him look like a foolish child in front of his classmates.

Well, two could play at that game.

"I don't know, Professor, I certainly could have used some of those spells this summer when a dementor sucked the soul out of my *muggle cousin*."

Several sharp intakes of breath sounded around him. Umbridge's face turned the same sort of colour Harry usually saw on Uncle Vernon, right before Harry got the living daylights beaten out of him.

"Ten points from Gryffindor, Mr Potter," she snapped.

"For making a true statement?" he asked, eyebrows raised. "You can't deny it, Professor — the Auror Department case notes are available for anyone who wants to look." Everyone in