

At the end of the Sorting, the tables filled with food after some brief words from Dumbledore. Harry was ravenous, and eagerly began to fill his plate.

“Guess the hat’s told us, then,” Katie remarked, passing Harry a bowl of peas. “Better keep up our study groups. I’m glad — I swear, my OWLs wouldn’t have been half as good if not for some of the Ravenclaws helping me out.”

“You got good marks, then?” Harry asked, and Katie beamed as she nodded.

“Are they really as hard as people say they are?” Neville asked anxiously. Katie’s smile softened.

“They’re not too bad. As long as you remember to go over the early years of stuff as well as just what you learn in fifth year. But the teachers are good at making sure the important things are covered, and now everyone revises together I’m sure you’ll do great. Well,” she added, glancing doubtfully at the brand new professor. “DADA might be a bit hit and miss. But hell, that’s what you’ve got Harry for, isn’t it?” she joked. “I bet he knows more on the subject than I do.”

“Probably knows more than our new teacher, by the looks of her,” George agreed, bumping Harry’s shoulder as a flush filled the younger Gryffindor’s cheeks.

“There’s something familiar about her,” he said, looking back up at the woman as she cut dainty little bites of chicken. “I’ve seen her before, somewhere. Maybe in the paper?”

“We’ll find out soon enough,” Fred dismissed. “Can you pass the gravy?”

As they ate, Harry happily listened to the three chasers talk about their summers. He tried to, at least; hearing his name whispered from a dozen different directions was rather distracting, as much as he was somewhat used to it after all these years. Luckily, from what he could gather only a handful of people were calling him a lunatic and quoting the *Prophet*; the rest were remarking on how he wasn’t sat with Ron and Hermione.

He smiled vindictively into his roast beef. Perhaps with the whole school talking about it, they might finally leave him alone.

Dinner made way for dessert, and when the room was full of groaning stomachs and straining belts, Dumbledore vanished the plates with a wave of his hand, standing up. Harry stifled a yawn as the headmaster went through the usual warnings about the forest and banned objects, perking up when he gestured to the woman in pink at his side.

“Professor Umbridge, our new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor,” he introduced. Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw Susan at the Hufflepuff table, glaring like a scalded cat.

He knew that name. Why did he know that name?

It hit him just as the woman stood to make a speech of her own, clearing her throat in a falsely delicate way. Her every word sent a chill down his spine.

She was Fudge’s Senior Undersecretary. The very definition of a Ministry toadie.