

That didn't surprise Harry even a little bit. Behind him, Umbridge made a small noise that might have been a cough, and was summarily ignored.

"Given your grades, especially this year, I can't see you having a problem with that part of the application."

Umbridge coughed again, a little louder. McGonagall's jaw clenched. "There are a few subjects that are mandatory — Defence Against the Dark Arts, naturally."

Another cough. And another, at each pause McGonagall made as she talked Harry through the subjects required, until finally she could ignore it no longer.

"May I offer you a cough drop, Dolores?" the Scottish woman bit out, and Harry pursed his lips tightly to avoid laughing.

"I was just concerned you may not have received my note on Mr Potter's most recent Defence Against the Dark Arts grades," Umbridge said sweetly.

"Oh, this thing?" McGonagall held up a piece of pink parchment between two fingers, like it was something particularly foul. "Yes I got it. Anyway, Potter, as I was saying; you've made generally high marks in Defence Against the Dark Arts — Professor Lupin in particular thought you had an aptitude for the subject—"

Umbridge's interruptions continued, her voice getting higher and higher until Harry worried she might strain something, her insistence that Harry would never become an auror so vehement.

Harry would have felt bad about faking his career interest just to wind her up, but he couldn't, not when McGonagall was so clearly enjoying the verbal sparring, and so clearly winning. Harry's recent grades spoke for themselves, in everything but Potions and DADA; and Harry knew he could ace both of those exams without breaking a sweat.

"If you cannot control your behaviour, Dolores, I will ask you to remove yourself from my office while I advise my students," McGonagall snapped eventually, cutting through Umbridge's rant about Harry's unsuitability for any Ministry profession.

"The Minister would never employ Harry Potter!"

"I'd suspect he's more worried about his own job than Potter's, at this point," came McGonagall's swift reply. Umbridge recoiled as if slapped.

"Yes, yes, that's what you want, isn't it! You want Albus Dumbledore to replace Cornelius Fudge — I'm sure you think you'll be where I am, then, hmm?"

McGonagall's deadpan stare was at odds with Umbridge's wide-eyed fanaticism. Harry sat in the middle, trying not to crack a rib from holding in his laughter.

"Dolores, you're starting to look a little... purple," McGonagall said, holding a remarkably straight face. "Perhaps a trip to the hospital wing is in order?" Earlier in the week, Ginny and Colin had slipped something into her dinner that made her head swell up like a giant