

The stern woman frowned. “Indeed — I am beginning to realise that.” She sighed quietly. “I will admit, I don’t know how I can help. If I were to go against Albus’ wishes—“

“You’d lose your job,” Harry finished grimly. “No, it’s not worth it. Just— honestly, I have most of it under control. It’s just good to know you’re on my side, even if you have to pretend you’re on his.” She wouldn’t be the only person limited by their closeness to Albus Dumbledore. “We’ll need someone trustworthy to take charge of the school once we get Dumbledore out.”

McGonagall blinked, then slowly raised an eyebrow. “I’m sure I don’t want to know who is involved in this ‘we’ you refer to, do I?” she asked, dryly, making Harry grin. “Well... I did think the headship may be coming for me in the next few years, though admittedly I assumed it would be due to Albus’ age. How...” She paused, the topic clearly a difficult one for her. “How long do you expect to take?”

“He’ll be gone by the end of this school year,” Harry promised her. Whether that was due to his work discrediting the man, or the curse on his arm taking its toll, that remained to be seen — but that wasn’t information McGonagall needed.

She gave a tight nod, shoulders tensing slightly. “Right, then.” McGonagall straightened some papers on her desk, and when she looked at Harry her eyes were full of pure Gryffindor ferocity. “Whatever I can do to help, Potter, I shall. You only have to ask.”

There was a small pain in Harry’s chest, a knife worming between his ribs — how different would his life had been if he’d heard those words from her three years ago, or even earlier?

But it was too late to think like that. At least he had her on his side now, when it was truly important. “Thank you, Professor,” he said sincerely.

If there were a way to achieve his goals without hurting the people he cared about with the realisation that their idol was a manipulative, selfish man bent on the destruction of magical Britain for the sake of his own glory, Harry would have jumped at it. But there wasn’t.

The truth was hard, but it was necessary. He only hoped the rest of the wizarding world took it so gracefully.

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As term rolled on, the students of Hogwarts learned to dread the morning post.

The flurry of owls arriving in the Great Hall wasn’t as big as it had been in previous years; fewer students, for one, but also many people not finding it safe to write. And plenty of students ending their subscription to the *Prophet* now that it was essentially Dark propaganda and misinformation.

But in amongst the usual cluster of post delivery, there were black envelopes.

These were a brand new development since the *regime change* at the Ministry. A way of informing Hogwarts students of a death in the family. Either a thinly-veiled taunt at the death