

“Tomorrow after dinner, in the library?” she suggested, only the hint of a wobble to her voice. “Whatever those spells you used were, they helped a lot — it feels better already. I want to know them, in case she gets anyone else I know.” Then she smiled shakily. “In case I get another one.”

“Cho, you don’t have to—“

“*Don’t*,” she cut him off sharply. “Don’t tell me what to do, Harry Potter. I made my choice this morning, and I’d do the same again. You aren’t the only one who hates that *hag*. Let people make their own choices.” She blinked away a few more tears. “Like Cedric made his choice, to stand with you.”

Well, when she put it like that, there was nothing he could say. “I’ll meet you there,” he promised. “Let me walk you back upstairs.”

Cho didn’t argue, and the pair of them walked side by side, completely silent but for Cho’s occasional sniffles. At the top of the staircase, Harry gave her one last tight hug before they parted ways. On the way back to Gryffindor Tower, rage burned deep within him.

Dolores Umbridge was going to regret the day she decided to take on Hogwarts.

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Tuesdays were awkward, lunch break splitting Harry’s double Transfiguration period right in half. He went straight to the Tower from class to exchange his books, then wolfed down a meal, giving Snape an intent look that the man couldn’t possibly ignore. He waited for the tiniest nod, then left the hall, ignoring Neville’s confusion.

Despite the small rebellion of Monday morning, everyone was sat at the correct house table. By the way some of the older Ravenclaws looked at him, Cho had told a few people what detentions with Umbridge entailed.

They eyed him with respect, that he had endured two weeks of it so stoically, but their gazes made Harry feel sick.

It was much better when people didn’t know.

He beat Snape to the man’s office, but only by a minute. The Potions Master strolled in, locking and warding the door in his wake. “What?” he snapped irritably. Harry just smirked.

“Hypothetically,” he began, dragging out the words.

Snape’s eyes raised skyward. “Merlin help me.”

Ignoring the mutter, Harry continued. “If I were to need a way to secure the secrecy of a group of people — say, thirty-odd students of varying age and house — in order to *hypothetically* lead a secret Defence Against the Dark Arts study group right under Umbridge’s nose, do you have any suggestions for how I might go about doing that? Hypothetically.”