

spot of the seventh floor and wait until curfew, I would find something that I had been looking for for a very long time. I questioned her further, but all she would tell me was that there was some sort of illegal meeting going on, of which Potter was the leader. At that point, she became too scared to say anything further.”

Harry would bet she was scared — having her memory suddenly disappear in the middle of Umbridge’s office, no longer knowing why she was there.

Fudge turned to Marietta with an expression that was probably supposed to be kind, but mostly looked constipated. “You did a very brave thing, going to Professor Umbridge. Can you tell me more about this meeting? Who was there? How many people were involved?”

Marietta shook her head silently, and frustration passed across Fudge’s face.

“You will remember, Minister, that back in October I heard word of Potter’s intention to form a duelling club, to circumvent the Ministry-approved Defence Against the Dark Arts curriculum,” Umbridge volunteered, sending a venomous look to Harry. Harry wondered how that rumour had made it to her ears.

“I was going to, but then you introduced the new Decree, so I didn’t,” he replied blandly. Umbridge’s lips curled in a brief snarl.

“And yet here we are, hearing of such a thing six months later. Six months *after* the Decree was put in place.”

“And yet, Dolores, we do not have any evidence that any meetings occurred at all,” Dumbledore cut in, offering his ever-present eye twinkle and genial smile. “So I believe you have brought Mr Potter here on false pretences.”

“We have Miss Edgecombe’s word!” Umbridge insisted, gripping Marietta’s shoulder tightly. “Tell him, you silly girl!”

“I don’t know anything,” Marietta blurted, tears welling in her eyes. “I don’t—I don’t remember any meetings.”

“You’re lying!” Umbridge screeched. “You told me yourself!”

“I ask you, Professor Umbridge,” said Dumbledore, voice going stony, “not to yell at my students, if you please. It is clear that Miss Edgecombe has no memory of the illegal duelling club you are referring to. Likely because it does not exist.” He glanced back at Harry. “All you have evidence of is Mr Potter and Mr Longbottom using a hidden room within the castle to quietly complete some homework. Hardly a crime,” he added, chuckling.

Fudge rounded on Umbridge, fury in his gaze. “You told me you had proof, Dolores,” he hissed. Umbridge’s eyes bulged.

“I did! I do!” She floundered for a moment, and Harry sat there, watching her impassively, trying to force down his grin. She had absolutely nothing on him, and they both knew it.