

McGonagall stared at him for a long moment, quietly despairing. Then she sighed. “Have a biscuit, Potter.”

Harry blinked as a tartan biscuit tin was levitated towards him. “I...” What?

McGonagall just stared at him, until he’d selected a Ginger Newt and taken a bite. “It’s the first day of term, Potter. You need to be more careful.”

Harry swallowed. Not quite the scolding he’d anticipated. She actually sounded *anxious*. “I never explicitly said that Voldemort had returned,” he told her. “I said that a Death Eater had killed Cedric, and she was welcome to draw her own conclusions. Oh, and I, uh, sort-of blamed the Ministry for what happened to my cousin.”

McGonagall’s lips pursed. “My condolences,” she murmured, and he nodded. He supposed he was going to be getting a lot of that, now; the story would be all over the school by dinner. “But that doesn’t excuse this kind of behaviour. Acting up in Dolores Umbridge’s class could cost you much more than house points and a detention.”

“I know,” Harry agreed. “But I know what she’s here for. I know what she’s trying to do.”

McGonagall eyed him carefully. “Yes, I think that you do,” she murmured. “I suppose it would be too much to ask you to keep your head down in her classes?”

Harry couldn’t help but grin. “Professor, no offence, but when have you *ever* known me to keep my head down?” The despairing look returned, and he chuckled. “If she’s focused on me, she’s distracted from everyone else.” Let McGonagall think he was talking about Dumbledore, about the Order. Harry couldn’t give two fucks about them — but if Umbridge was busy playing word games with him, trying to get him to incriminate himself as a liar and a lunatic, then she wouldn’t have time to pay attention to Susan and the rest getting into place to take Fudge down as soon as they all came of age.

And the more he could get the Ministry puppet to deny Voldemort’s return, the easier it would be to unseat Fudge and his whole useless regimen when the Dark Lord finally reared his ugly head.

“You’re just a student, Potter — it’s not your responsibility to protect everyone else.” McGonagall sounded like she was worried about him, and Harry shot her what he hoped was a reassuring smile.

He had no idea how much she knew about Dumbledore’s meddling, but the fact that she didn’t approve of him martyring himself for the cause was a positive sign. Merlin, he hoped she wasn’t in cahoots with the headmaster. The school needed her far too much.

“I’ll be alright, Professor. It’s just a detention.”

“Actually, according to this note, it’s detention every evening this week,” the woman corrected with a slight frown. Harry cursed under his breath. “Language, Potter,” came the automatic scold.