

the class was staring at him now, their books utterly abandoned. Harry's pulse thudded in his neck, though his hands were steady; Umbridge wasn't even *close* to the most intimidating thing Harry had ever experienced.

"What happened to your cousin is of course, a devastating accident," Umbridge relented, "but you cannot use one outlying example as a call for everyone to have free use of *offensive magics*. The laws are there for a reason, after all, Mr Potter. The Ministry exists to protect its citizens."

"So my cousin didn't count because he's a muggle?"

"That is *not* the point, Mr Potter."

"What about Cedric Diggory?" Harry was on a roll now. "Where was the Ministry to *protect* him when a Death Eater hit him with a Killing curse?"

Umbridge stilled. "Cedric Diggory's death was a tragic accident," she said, venomously sweet. She looked away from Harry, facing the class at large. "You have all been told that a certain Dark wizard has returned from the dead," she announced. "That is, of course, a lie. *Certain* members of our community are trying to scare you into believing this Dark wizard is at large, and that sort of fear-mongering will not be tolerated."

"If I'm lying about Voldemort, what happened to Cedric? Or are you blaming that one on the Triwizard Tournament? Because I'll remind you, *Professor*, that Minister Fudge was one of the most staunch supporters of bringing back the tournament, despite peoples' fears over the previous death averages, and he was the one to assure everyone that steps had been taken to prevent a lethal outcome." He smiled coolly. "So which is it?"

"*Detention*, Mr Potter!" Umbridge screeched. "Tomorrow evening, five o'clock. My office. And I will kindly ask you to cease disturbing your classmates and return to your reading."

Harry paused, anger bubbling within him, trying desperately to remember everything Snape had taught him over the summer about not letting his emotions get the better of him.

"One last question, Professor. About your *course aims*." He plastered an innocent smile on his face. He was starting to lose feeling in his hand, from how long it had been in the air.

"What now, Mr Potter?"

"If the Ministry's stance is that none of us will ever need to use defensive spells outside of class, and the only time we should cast them is in controlled exam conditions, why do we bother learning them?"

She stared at him, and he stared back, unflinching.

"I beg your pardon?" Her falsely-girlish voice was *painfully* saccharine.

"Well I thought the whole point of school was to learn things that would benefit us as adults, in the real world. So if defensive spells are *not necessary* in the real world, why are they on the Ministry's curriculum?"