

When it came time for Umbridge to speak to the students about the teacher under inspection, the pink-clad woman paused, eyeing the class, considering her dilemma.

Did she speak to the Slytherins, who would only sing the praises of their Housemaster? Or did she go to the Gryffindors, and risk further infuriating the one teacher in the school who seemed to hate Harry Potter as much as she did?

Harry was not surprised when she chose the Slytherin side of the room, quietly sidling up to Pansy.

Snape passed their desk, sneering at the bubbling tar-like substance in Neville's cauldron, before surveying the oily grey substance in Harry's; an entirely adequate Strengthening Solution, ready to cool. Harry looked up at him imploringly, mentally begging him not to vanish it.

A long moment passed, before Snape simply huffed. "You will have to do better than that, Mr Potter, if you want even a chance of a passing OWL grade. And five points from Gryffindor for interfering with Longbottom's work."

Harry just nodded; that was as much as he could hope for, under the circumstances.

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With Gryffindor quidditch practice cancelled while Umbridge *considered things*, Harry found himself at a loose end for the evening. He had homework, of course, but the idea of going and sitting in the common room to try and do it made his head pound. Gryffindor territory was not exactly conducive to focus and learning.

Just as he was mentally debating between the library or an abandoned classroom, Hannah appeared, tugging on his sleeve. "Come study with us," she urged. He raised an eyebrow, and she smiled. "*Actual* studying. It's been a while."

She had a point, and when Harry entered their usual empty classroom — now warded to the gills, to keep Umbridge out — most of the heirs were gathered, their books spread out over the desks, clustered by subject. Neville was already there, getting Divination help from Parvati, who seemed to take Trelawney's probation as a personal call to make sure every one of them got as high a grade as possible.

It was nice, not having the conversation be about Umbridge, or the Wizengamot, or anything serious — just all of them studying together, like they had last year.

"Hey, does anyone mind if I put my Wireless on?" Harry asked, pulling the device from his bag. "Not too loud, I swear. But Puddlemere are playing." Their keeper had been injured in the last game, and while reports said he was fine to play, Harry was quietly hoping Oliver might get subbed on. His ex-captain hadn't taken to the field yet this season, but from the chatter going on, the Puddlemere main keeper wasn't quite up to scratch, and there was a chance Oliver could make his way to the main team for good, if he played well when he was able.