

“I am here to teach you using a Ministry-approved method that does not invite students to give their opinion on matters about which they understand very little,” Umbridge said nastily, looking far more pleased about shutting down a sixteen year-old girl than a grown adult should. Harry snorted quietly — after two summers with Remus Lupin, he would bet that he understood far more about jinxes and their classification than both Umbridge and Hermione combined. But he wouldn’t speak up. He was trying to be good.

“Your previous teachers may have allowed you more license, but as none of them — perhaps save Professor Quirrell — would have passed a Ministry inspection—“

“Professor Lupin has a Mastery in Defence as awarded by the International Society of Defensive Magics,” Harry burst out; the slight against his beloved godfather was one step too far on his already frayed temper. “He was more qualified to teach this class than you’ll ever be. Professor Quirrell, on the other hand, had Voldemort sticking out of the back of his head — but sure, maybe the Ministry would *approve* of that.”

Umbridge stared him dead in the eye, nostrils flaring with fury. Harry heard Neville let out a quiet, resigned, “*Harry, no,*” but it was too late.

“I think another week’s detention would do you some good, Mr Potter,” Umbridge told him. He didn’t flinch.

It was worth it.

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“I can’t believe you accused the Ministry of being on You-Know-Who’s side,” Neville hissed as soon as they were free of the classroom.

“She was the one who said Quirrell would pass inspection!” Harry retorted. His friend shot him a deadpan look — that wasn’t an excuse, and they both knew it. “I couldn’t just sit there and let her talk shit about Remus like that.”

“You defending him is only going to make it worse, you know that.”

Harry was saved having to reply by the sight of Hannah Abbott sidling up to Parvati ahead of them, whispering something in the girl’s ear and hurrying along the corridor. As she passed, she gave Harry and Neville a pointed look and a tiny nod.

“Right now?” Neville murmured, and Hannah nodded again, then kept walking.

Harry heard Parvati say something to Lavender about needing to go to the loo before dinner, promising to catch up. He and Neville casually detoured away from the flow of students all heading down to the Great Hall — and Harry led the way into a passageway that would take them to just outside the classroom Susan liked to meet in.

“This is the *worst* timing,” he grumbled, checking his watch — he had to be in Umbridge’s office at five — but he wasn’t going to skip the meeting. Umbridge had only been High Inquisitor for a day, and the whole atmosphere of the school had changed.