

They quickly began to gather two piles; those who believed Harry, and those who thought he was just an attention-seeking nutter. They were so engrossed in the pile of mail, they didn't notice the approach that had the rest of the hall going ominously silent.

"*Hem, hem.*" Harry's head snapped up, his stomach squirming in a mix of dread and excitement. "What is going on here, Mr Potter?"

"It's the morning post, Professor," he replied, watching her eyes narrow.

"Five points from Gryffindor for cheek. *Why*, Mr Potter, do you have so many letters?"

There was no point in trying to hide it. "I wrote an article recently, about what happened to me last June," he told her, watching a muscle twitch in her cheek as her jaw clenched tightly. "These are letters from people who read it."

"An article?" Umbridge repeated sharply. "What do you mean?"

Harry picked up his copy of the *Quibbler*, holding it out. "You're welcome to read it, Professor."

Umbridge took one look at the cover and turned a violent shade of red. "I see," she bit out, stubby fingers clenching around the magazine. "*Clearly*, Mr Potter, your continued detentions are not enough of a *deterrent*, for you. No matter how hard I try to teach you not to spread your awful lies, the message simply will not stick." Her eyes darted down to the scar on the back of his hand. "Perhaps something a touch more... restrictive is required."

Harry swallowed, wondering what she could possibly do that would be worse than having him carve his own hand open every night for a week. She, too, seemed to be struggling to think of something — until her eyes landed on the huge points hourglasses at the back of the hall. "You do not care about detentions, do you, Mr Potter? Even before I arrived here, you were no stranger to them. But," she said, a slow, vindictive smile spreading across her lips that made Harry's stomach clench. "You do care about quidditch."

His blood went cold. Her smile widened.

"Yes, that will do quite nicely, I think. Removing you from your house quidditch team might make you finally think about the consequences of your actions."

"I beg your pardon!" That was McGonagall, striding over with a look of absolute fury on her face. "You have no right to do that! Potter is a Gryffindor, it is my responsibility to think of suitable punishments! And there is nothing in the school rules that prevents students from writing articles for publication."

"He may be a Gryffindor, but I am the High Inquisitor," Umbridge returned sweetly. "I think you will find it is entirely within my right to punish students, especially when their heads of houses are not *fit* for the task." She turned back to Harry, triumph on her toad-like face. "Mr Potter, you are hereby banned from quidditch, for life. You will surrender your broomstick to me by dinner this evening."