

Harry winced.

“My colleagues have told me quite a bit about you,” McGonagall continued. “Particularly, the feedback they have gotten from those students who claim to have been under your tutelage all year.”

“I... Umbridge wasn’t wrong about the secret defence club,” Harry admitted, and McGonagall’s lips twitched.

“We all knew that from the start, Potter,” she informed him dryly. “What we didn’t know was quite how... comprehensive your curriculum appears to be.”

“There are more useful spells in a fight than just curses and jinxes, Professor.”

“Indeed. And the healing charms? The conjuration? Professor Flitwick tells me some of his students say you taught them some rather advanced concealment spells.”

“I asked everyone what spells they wanted to learn,” Harry dismissed, “so really, it was a group effort.”

McGonagall’s shrewd gaze made him want to squirm. “Indeed,” she said flatly. “And the five students who accompanied you to the Ministry, and by all reports aided you in the capture of no less than fourteen Death Eaters?” Harry had not yet heard that official number, but it sounded about right, and it made him grin.

“They asked to learn how to fight. So we learned together.” It sounded a lot better than admitting Remus and Sirius had been training him in secret. “I had a bit of help from some Order members. But it’s easy enough to teach people how to manage a solid Stunner, Disarming charm and Incarcerous charm. Those are the important ones.”

“I hear you also taught your friends to snap their opponent’s wand.” He couldn’t tell if McGonagall sounded impressed or dismayed.

“Only in a serious fight,” he insisted. “But if their wand is snapped, they can’t get it back and hex you with it.”

There was silence once more as McGonagall focused on making it up the last few stairs. Then she eyed him carefully. “Professor Dumbledore believes there to be outside influences at work on you.”

Harry held in a snort; the only outside influence was Dumbledore himself, and Harry had shed those! “I have learnt over the last few years that Professor Dumbledore is not as omnipotent as he seems. Nor as trustworthy.”

McGonagall’s eyebrows jumped up her forehead, but Harry held her gaze patiently. He wanted so badly for her to be on his side, to be willing to see Dumbledore for the man he truly was. “I believe Albus likes to think himself infallible,” she said eventually, “and that can often lead to less than ideal results.”