

Then Umbridge went completely still, before turning to the headmaster, a cold smile forming. “Miss Edgecombe has *no memory* of the events, does she?” she echoed his previous words. “Perhaps because she’s been... Obliviated?”

The portraits of previous heads of school, who were all shamelessly listening in, gasped in outrage.

“That is quite the serious accusation, Dolores,” Dumbledore replied evenly.

“I have known for weeks, *months* even, that something is going on here!” Umbridge continued, a hysterical light in her eyes. “Heard the little brats whispering around the school, thinking they’re *so* very clever. They have been meeting, Minister, I assure you. And what’s more, do you know what they call themselves?” She smiled a crazed, dangerous smile. “The *Hogwarts Army*.”

That wasn’t entirely true, but it was enough to have Fudge sucking in a sharp breath, rounding on Dumbledore with accusation plain on his face. “I knew it! My advisors thought me mad, but I knew it!” he bragged. “I told them you were plotting against me, training the students to fight me! I suppose Potter was your little general, was he? You’ve always had quite the soft spot for him. And now you’ve erased this poor girl’s memory to keep your own secrets!”

For one heart-stopping moment, Harry was sure Dumbledore was going to throw him under the bus. *Sure* the headmaster would use this as the perfect excuse to punish Harry for his rebellious ways and blame him for everything; Umbridge would likely accept it, even if Fudge didn’t. Her enemy had always been more Harry than Dumbledore anyway.

But Dumbledore merely smiled, and laid his hands on the desk, one still holding his wand. “Well, I suppose the game is up,” he agreed. “Would you like a statement, Cornelius?”

Harry didn’t move as Fudge practically salivated over the information, keenly directing Percy Weasley to write it all down as Dumbledore admitted to plotting to overthrow the Ministry. Umbridge kept shooting Harry little glances, as if expecting him to defend his headmaster — especially when Fudge mentioned arresting the man — but Harry stayed silent. Dumbledore knew what he was doing. He obviously recognised it was best to keep Harry in school, that it would be easier for him to get the bullshit charges dropped than it would be to get Harry unexpelled. And he seemed far too eager to make Fudge squirm.

It all came to a head when Fudge attempted to have the aurors subdue Dumbledore, and suddenly there was a bright flash of light and a loud bang. Harry dropped to the ground instinctively, and when he raised his head the room looked like a bomb had gone off; everyone was unconscious, except for himself and Dumbledore. The headmaster stood behind his desk, and he looked at Harry — though very carefully did not make eye contact. He was still scared of what he might find.

“You must be careful, Harry,” he insisted quickly. “This will not stop Dolores from watching you. I will not be around to help a second time.” He gathered some things from his desk, sweeping them into his robe pocket. “Work hard on your Occlumency, and remember what