

Harry Potter 931

Chapter 931: Umbridge's First Lesson

Harry was now more eager to become an Auror, but he didn't know the qualifications nor the grades required.

"Not really," said Ron slowly, looking slightly sheepish. "Except ... well ..."

"What?" Harry urged, everyone looking at him.

"Well, it would be cool to be an Auror," said Ron in an offhand voice.

"Yeah, it would," said Harry fervently, "it's the best job ever."

"But they're, like, the elite," said Ron. "You've got to be really good. What about you, Colin?"

"I thought it would be great to be a photographer!" said Colin, "to shoot for *Hogwarts Magic News*."

"You're already doing that," said Ron dismissively. "What about you, Hermione?"

"I'm not quite sure yet, I have too many ideas," said Hermione. "In any case, I think I'd really like to do something worthwhile..."

She paused for a moment, not finishing her sentence. In fact, it would be even better if she could be with Evan!

"An Auror's worthwhile!" said Harry.

"Yes, it is, but it's not the only worthwhile thing," said Hermione thoughtfully. "I mean, if I could take S.P.E.W. further ..."

Everyone fell silent, careful to avoid looking at her in the eyes.

Breakfast ended with this, and Harry, Hermione, and Ron set off toward their boring History of Magic classroom.

Evan and Colin went to the second floor for the Defense Against the Dark Arts class, which was Umbridge's first class at Hogwarts.

Evan wasn't sure if Umbridge scheduled the fourth year class on Monday because of him.

One thing he was certain of was that he had no expectations for Professor Umbridge's Defense Against the Dark Arts class.

As expected, when he and Colin entered the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom they found Professor Umbridge already seated at the teacher's desk, wearing the fluffy pink cardigan of the night before and the black velvet bow on top of her head, looking like a large fly perched unwisely on top of an even larger toad.

"Hello, Evan Mason, nice to see you again!" she said in a sickeningly sweet voice.

“Hello, Professor!” said Evan cautiously, he was not pleased at all.

“Oh, please take a seat quickly. We’re about to start class!” Professor Umbridge had a fake smile on her face, as if she and Evan were very familiar and intimate. “We’ll have plenty of time to talk later.”

Evan sat down and saw Ginny make a face at him.

The class was quiet as it entered the room; Professor Umbridge was, as yet, an unknown quantity and nobody knew yet how strict a disciplinarian she was likely to be. They knew nothing about her, and it was better to be careful.

“Well, good morning, class!” she said when finally the whole class had sat down.

“Good morning, Professor!” The answers were scattered and casual.

“Tut, tut,” said Professor Umbridge. “That won’t do, now, will it? You should have learned the proper etiquette and I should like you, please, to reply ‘Good morning, Professor Umbridge.’ One more time, please. Good morning, class!”

“Good morning, Professor Umbridge.” Evan opened his mouth, but did not make a sound.

“The sound was not neat enough, nor loud enough!” said Umbridge critically. “Class, please do it again.”

They silently exchanged a look of surprise and unease.

Based on Professor Umbridge’s demeanor, if their greetings didn’t satisfy her, they might be practicing for the whole lesson.

Finally, they chanted it back at her, and some of them even shouted it out.

“There, now,” said Professor Umbridge sweetly. “That wasn’t too difficult, was it? I hope that from now on, before every class, everyone can do this. It’s the most basic respect for teachers. Now; wands away and quills out, please.”

Hearing her words, many of the class exchanged gloomy looks again.

The order “wands away” had never yet been followed by a lesson they had found interesting.

The Defense Against the Dark Arts class had always focused on practical combat. Without wands, were they supposed to deal with dark wizards using quills?

After the whole class shoved their wands back inside their bags and pulled out quill, ink, and parchment. Professor Umbridge opened her handbag, extracted her own wand, which was an unusually short one, and tapped the blackboard sharply with it.

Two lines of words appeared on the board at once:

Defense Against the Dark Arts

A Return to Basic Principles.

“Class, I’m sure you’ve all had the same doubts. Your teaching in this subject has been rather disrupted and fragmented, hasn’t it?” stated Professor Umbridge, turning to face the class with her hands clasped neatly in front of her, and then said, “I have checked your course materials and related homework and test papers for the past few years, and all I can say is that they’re all rubbish. You’ve wasted three years for nothing, not learning any useful Defense Against the Dark Arts. There has been constant changing of teachers, many of whom do not seem to have followed any Ministry-approved curriculum...”

In front of her, the students quietly exchanged glances again, not knowing what Umbridge meant.

Did she mean to say that they had been wasting their time for the past three years?

That might have been true for the year with Lockhart, but honestly, Lupin and Sirius taught them quite well. They taught them legitimate Defense Against the Dark Arts. Even the fake Moody showed them what real Dark magic was. As for the classes they had attended in the first half of this year, after the real Moody returned, they realized that was the real Auror.

They all felt that they had improved a lot. Wasn’t it too much to say that they had learned nothing and that the homework and test papers taught were rubbish?

Besides, there was Evan in their class, who was now recognized as the most powerful young wizard in Hogwarts.

Unlike those who were becoming somewhat angered by Umbridge’s words, Evan didn’t feel much. He wasn’t Harry and wouldn’t recklessly jump out in class and confront Umbridge, clearly giving her an excuse and an opportunity to punish him.

At least openly, everyone should abide by the rules.

Umbridge was their Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, the Ministry’s watchdog at Hogwarts. They couldn’t directly confront her, and it wasn’t the time to face her. But behind the scenes ...

Evan sniffed and put on an expression of an attentive and studious student, concentrating on listening. He felt like he was becoming more and more devious!

Chapter 932: Bad Courses

Umbridge looked around from her desk, observing them all.

“I believe you are all aware that there are many problems with this course. You will be pleased to know, however, that these problems are now to be rectified. We will be following a carefully structured, theory-centered, Ministry approved course of defensive magic this year. Copy down the following, please.”

She rapped the blackboard again; the first message vanished and was replaced by:

Course aims:

1. Understanding the principles underlying defensive magic.

1. Learning to recognize situations in which defensive magic can legally be used.
1. Placing the use of defensive magic in a context for practical use.

For a couple of minutes the room was full of the sound of scratching quills on parchment. When everyone had copied down Professor Umbridge's three course aims she said, "Has everybody got a copy of *Defensive Magical Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard?"

"Yes, that's right!" There was a dull murmur of assent throughout the class.

"That won't do, class, that won't do at all. I think we'll try that again," said Professor Umbridge. "When I ask you a question, I should like you to reply 'Yes, Professor Umbridge,' or 'No, Professor Umbridge.' So, has everyone got a copy of *Defensive Magical Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard?"

"Yes, Professor Umbridge," rang through the room.

"Good," said Professor Umbridge. "I should like you to turn to page five and read chapter one, 'Basics for Beginners.' There will be no need to talk. If you finish reading, please proceed to the next chapter."

A noisy discussion echoed in the classroom. It was a double period of Defense Against the Dark Arts lessons combined together.

Considering Umbridge's words, did she expect them to sit here reading the book all morning?

"Quiet!" said Umbridge, showing her small, pointed teeth. "We're reading just now, so if you have any queries we can deal with them at the end of class. Also, I expect you to raise your hand when asking questions in my classroom."

She stared at them all with those pouchy toad's eyes, and the classroom fell silent instantly.

Evan wouldn't confront Umbridge overtly in class, and had nothing to talk to her about. He turned to page five of his copy of *Defensive Magical Theory*, which was, as expected, desperately dull; first systematically expounding what Dark Magic was, and the corresponding Defense Against the Dark Arts, that was, White Magic.

Black magic and White magic, the distinction between the two was not as obvious as black and white.

According to the perspective of the book's author, Wilbert Slinkhard, whether it was Dark magic or White magic, they were different techniques and ideas for controlling one's own spiritual power. For example, using Avada Kedavra required intense malice and murderous intent, while using the Patronus Charm required the user to think of happy things, generate pleasant emotions, or have a strong protective mindset.

These things were already very basic for Evan, and the explanations in this book were very long-winded and boring, full of esoteric and long sentences. It was quite as bad as listening to Professor Binns. He found himself drifting away and thinking about other things.

The classroom was silent, and next to Evan, Colin was absent-mindedly staring at the same spot on the page.

Many students had not flipped a page for a long time, but Umbridge seemed unconcerned.

She settled herself in the chair behind the teacher's desk, observing all the young wizards, one by one; not clear what her thoughts were.

While Evan and his classmates had their noses stuck in their books the entire morning, Harry and the others had just finished a mind-numbing History of Magic class. Professor Binns droned on about Giant Wars for a full hour and a half.

In another's teacher's hands, this subject might have been mildly interesting, but Professor Binns, their ghost teacher, lectured them in his wheezy, droning voice.

Why not just let them read the book by themselves?

Probably, Hermione alone seemed able to resist the soporific power of Binns's voice.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief when they emerged from the History of Magic classroom.

"How would it be if I refused to lend you my notes this year?" Hermione asked coldly.

She was very dissatisfied with Harry and Ron's behavior in class; they hadn't been paying attention at all.

Ron kept passing notes to Lavender at first, and then spent the remaining time playing hangman on a corner of his parchment with Harry.

"We'd fail our O.W.L.s," said Ron. "If you want that on your conscience, Hermione ..."

"Well, you'd deserve it," she snapped. "You don't even try to listen to him, do you?"

"We do try," said Ron. "We just haven't got your brains or your memory or your concentration ... you and Evan are just cleverer than we are ... is it nice to rub it in?"

"Oh, don't give me that rubbish," said Hermione, but she looked slightly mollified. "I wonder how it went for Evan in his first class with that woman. What do you reckon she taught them?"

"Maybe like Moody, show everyone the Dark Arts?"

"That's impossible. She's not Mad-Eye. She won't do such a crazy thing. It's not allowed by the Ministry of Magic. Besides, don't forget why she came to Hogwarts," said Hermione. "She's here on behalf of Fudge to interfere at Hogwarts, and she won't really teach us any skills."

"I don't know, but if she conducts actual combat drills, Evan will definitely have a chance to teach her a lesson," said Harry.

They continued discussing the topic until Snape walked into the dungeon, causing them to quickly close their mouths and fall silent.

The moment the class had seen Snape, quiet had fallen and all fidgeting stopped. Snape's mere presence was usually enough to ensure a class's silence.

Harry originally thought that since Snape was also a member of the Order of the Phoenix, it would be better to be more or less right with them.

But he quickly realized how wrong he was, far off the mark.

"Before we begin today's lesson," said Snape, sweeping over to his desk and staring around at them all, "I think it appropriate to remind you that next June you will be sitting an important examination, during which you will prove how much you have learned about the composition and use of magical potions. Moronic though some of this class undoubtedly are, I expect you to scrape an 'Acceptable' in your O.W.L., or suffer my ... displeasure."

His gaze lingered this time upon Neville, who gulped in horror.

Chapter 933: Unstable Harry

"After this year, of course, many of you will cease studying with me," Snape went on. "I take only the very best into my N.E.W.T. Potions class, which means that some of us will certainly be saying goodbye."

His eyes rested on Harry and his lip curled. Harry glared back, feeling a grim pleasure at the idea that he would be able to give up Potions after fifth year. That was probably the best news he'd heard recently.

"But we have another year to go before that happy moment of farewell," said Snape softly, "so whether you are intending to attempt N.E.W.T. or not, I advise all of you to concentrate your efforts upon maintaining the high-pass level I have come to expect from my O.W.L. students."

He paused, flicked his wand, and the ingredients and brewing method of the potion appeared on the blackboard.

"Today we will be mixing a potion that often comes up at Ordinary Wizarding Level: the Draught of Peace, a potion to calm anxiety and soothe agitation. Be warned: If you are too heavy-handed with the ingredients you will put the drinker into a heavy and sometimes irreversible sleep, so you will need to pay close attention to what you are doing."

Following the instructions on the blackboard, Harry tried hard to brew the Draught of Peace, which was the most difficult, fiddly potion he'd ever encountered. The ingredients had to be added to the cauldron in precisely the right order and quantities; the mixture had to be stirred exactly the right number of times, firstly in clockwise, then in counterclockwise directions; the heat of the flames on

which it was simmering had to be lowered to exactly the right level for a specific number of minutes before the final ingredient was added.

“A light silver vapor should now be rising from your potion,” called Snape, with ten minutes left to go.

Harry, who was sweating profusely, looked desperately around the dungeon. His own cauldron was issuing copious amounts of dark gray steam; Ron’s was spitting green sparks. Seamus was feverishly prodding the flames at the base of his cauldron with the tip of his wand, as they had gone out.

The surface of Hermione’s potion, however, was a shimmering mist of silver vapor, and as Snape swept by he looked down his hooked nose at it without comment, which meant that he could find nothing to criticize.

At Harry’s cauldron, however, Snape stopped, looking down at Harry with a horrible smirk on his face.

“Potter, what is this supposed to be?”

The Slytherins at the front of the class all looked up eagerly; they loved hearing Snape taunt Harry.

“The Draught of Peace,” said Harry tensely.

“Tell me, Potter,” said Snape softly, “can you read?”

“Yes, I can,” said Harry, his fingers clenched tightly around his wand.

“Astonishing! So, read the third line of the instructions for me, Potter.”

Harry squinted at the blackboard; it was not easy to make out the instructions through the haze of multicolored steam now filling the dungeon.

“ ‘Add powdered moonstone, stir three times counterclockwise, allow to simmer for seven minutes, then add two drops of syrup of hellebore.’ ”

His heart sank. He had not added syrup of hellebore, but had proceeded straight to the fourth line of the instructions after allowing his potion to simmer for seven minutes.

“Did you do everything on the third line, Potter?”

“No,” said Harry very quietly.

“I beg your pardon? I didn’t hear you; please say it again.”

“No,” said Harry, more loudly. “I forgot the hellebore.”

“I know you did, Potter, which means that this mess is utterly worthless. *Evanesco.*”

The contents of Harry’s potion vanished; he was left standing foolishly beside an empty cauldron.

“Those of you who have managed to read the instructions, fill one flagon with a sample of your potion, label it clearly with your name, and bring it up to my desk for testing. The performance of this preparation will affect your grades in the school

year," said Snape. "Homework: twelve inches of parchment on the properties of moonstone and its uses in potion-making, to be handed in on Thursday."

While everyone around him filled their flagons, Harry cleared away his things, seething.

His potion had been no worse than Ron's, which was now giving off a foul odor of bad eggs, or Neville's, which had achieved the consistency of just-mixed cement and which Neville was now having to gouge out of his cauldron.

Yet it was he, Harry, who would be receiving zero marks for the day's work.

He stuffed his wand back into his bag and slumped down onto his seat, watching everyone else march up to Snape's desk with filled and corked flagons. When at long last the bell rang, Harry was first out of the dungeon, not wanting to stay there for a moment longer.

As Evan and the others walked in the Great Hall after their dreary Defense Against the Dark Arts class, the ceiling had turned an even murkier gray during the morning. Rain was lashing the high windows, reflecting the gloomy mood of the fourth-year students.

The only one who was in a worse mood than them was Harry, and Evan could feel it just when he got close.

"That was really unfair for Snape to do that," said Hermione to Harry. "Your potion wasn't nearly as bad as Goyle's, when he put it in his flagon the whole thing shattered and set his robes on fire."

"Yeah, well, since when has Snape ever been fair to me?" said Harry, glowering at his plate.

"I did think he might be a bit better this year," said Hermione in a disappointed voice. "I mean ... you know ... Now he's in the Order of the Phoenix and everything."

She looked carefully around; there were half a dozen empty seats on either side of them and nobody was passing the table.

"Poisonous toadstools don't change their spots," said Ron sagely. "Anyway, I've always thought Dumbledore was cracked trusting Snape, where's the evidence he ever really stopped working for You-Know-Who?"

"I think Dumbledore's probably got plenty of evidence, even if he doesn't share it with you," snapped Hermione.

"Oh, shut up, the pair of you," said Harry heavily. "Can't you give it a rest? You're always having a go at each other, it's driving me mad."

Hermione and Ron both froze, looking angry and offended.

With that, and abandoning his shepherd's pie, Harry swung his schoolbag back over his shoulder. Just as he got up, he saw Evan and Colin walking over. He stopped for a moment, muttered a greeting, and walked away, leaving the four of them in a daze.

“What’s wrong with him?” Evan looked at Harry’s back in surprise; his mood had been unstable recently.

First, he’d had a quarrel with Seamus last night in front of all the students in the school, and now this...

Regardless of how close their relationship might be, it was evident that Harry’s temper was noticeably more volatile than before.

Perhaps the accumulated pressure had become too much for him; which was not the case at least during the previous semester.

“It’s that old bat Snape!” said Ron disgustedly. “He deliberately targeted Harry and gave him zero marks for the potion.”

“Let’s not talk about that. How was it on your end?” Hermione asked, handing Evan a piece of shepherd’s pie. “What did Professor Umbridge teach you in class?”

Chapter 934: The 5th-year Defense Against the Dark Arts Class

“Dull to the extreme; reading the whole morning,” said Colin with a sigh. “This is the most boring course I’ve ever taken. No talking, no sleeping, no fidgeting, not even leaning on the desk. We had to sit upright the whole morning, staring blankly at *Defensive Magical Theory*. Honestly, I didn’t absorb a single word.”

“Blimey, how could she do that?” Ron exclaimed in surprise. That sounded really awful.

Especially when everyone knew that all the years had the same Defense Against the Dark Arts classes, even Fred and George in their seventh year were required to buy *Defensive Magical Theory* as a textbook, which made it even worse.

There were six courses of the Defense Against the Dark Arts per week, which was equivalent to spending one and a half days staring blankly at a meaningless book.

It was truly a nightmare. While Professor Binns might have been tedious, he at least allowed students to do other things during his class. Sleeping or playing games were permissible as long as it didn’t disrupt his lecture. Clearly, that was not the case with Professor Umbridge’s class.

“And that’s not all. She also assigned us homework to continue reading this book and submit a parchment by Friday,” Colin dragged out his tone, “Twenty inches on ‘The Case for Non-Offensive Responses to Magical Attack.’”

“What does that mean?” Ron was a bit slow to catch on.

“I don’t know, that book is full of such incomprehensible sentences,” said Colin with dull eyes, “I’ve never written such a long parchment before, and she told everyone that this assignment will count towards the final grade of the year. Er... Evan, could you let me take a look at your parchment then?”

Before Evan could answer, Ron shouted angrily, "Just like Snape, I knew that woman..."

"Keep it down, Ron!" Hermione said disapprovingly. "Reading more books would do you good, and it wouldn't be so boring. But I really don't understand. It's a Defense Against the Dark Arts class, so what's the point of her approach? It contradicts the purpose of the course. We should be practicing defensive spells with our wands, especially given the current circumstances..."

"Have you forgotten her purpose of coming to Hogwarts?" Evan reminded them.

"Intervention at Hogwarts on behalf of the Ministry of Magic," said Hermione, recalling Umbridge's speech from the previous night.

"That's right, so we can't confront her, we can't openly oppose the Ministry of Magic, at least not on the surface, it's extremely irrational, and it's not good for us," said Evan. "In class, Do as she says."

Fudge was worried that Hogwarts would become a base for Dumbledore to train his own private army, he didn't want young wizards to learn powerful magic, but rather to restrict their development, and everything Umbridge did had to revolve around this so that Hogwarts would no longer be united.

However, what she was doing wouldn't be effective. Privately, Evan could rally students from other Houses and use the time to help his own people improve their skills. Whenever Voldemort took action, they could directly fight back.

Now was not the time to have a falling out with her, and Evan didn't want to be given detention and be constantly targeted by Umbridge, unable to do anything.

Sometimes, temporary compromise is for a better offense.

"But..." Hermione hesitated.

"Well, Umbridge asked me to have tea with her tonight, and I agreed to go over and have a talk with her before deciding how to proceed." Evan continued, "In any case, she's currently a professor at the school. Don't conflict with her in class, reading more books is also good for us, if you are bored, you can read other magic books."

"*Diffindo!*" He took out his copy of *Defensive Magical Theory* and lightly tapped it with his wand.

Instantly, the book and the cover were separated!

"*Reparo!*" Evan put together a copy of his magic research notes and the cover of *Defensive Magical Theory*.

With a flick of his wand, the two merged into one.

From the outside, there was no indication that the content of the book had changed.

"Evan, how can you do that?"

“What else can I do? Have a big argument with her, and then give her a reason to give me detention?” said Evan, handing the new *Defensive Magical Theory*

to Hermione. “That’s too childish, I’d better now Keep a low profile, at least on the surface. By the way, Professor McGonagall also meant this when she talked to me this morning. Remember to tell Harry not to be impulsive. His mood has been unstable recently.”

Evan and Professor McGonagall’s concerns were justified. During class in the afternoon, Ron and Hermione relayed what Evan had said at lunch and the things they needed to be cautious about to Harry. It didn’t have any effect; instead, it made him feel indignant.

He didn’t quite understand. How could Evan bow down to Umbridge and the Ministry like that?!

First Percy, then Snape, then Ron and Hermione, and now even Evan...

Therefore, when Umbridge asked everyone to read the first chapter “Basics for Beginners” in *Defensive Magical Theory*, Harry questioned without hesitation, “What’s the point of them doing this?”

As long as someone took the lead, it was easy to mobilize the resistance of the young wizards, and even Hermione was no longer hesitant.

Although she believed Evan’s advice was correct, not to clash with Professor Umbridge in the classroom, it didn’t mean that she was willing to waste time in class, and she had to help Harry.

“Sit down, Mr. Potter! I think the course aims are perfectly clear if you read them through carefully. If you don’t understand, then read them again,” said Professor Umbridge in a voice of determined sweetness.

“But there’s nothing written up there in your course aims about using defensive spells,” said Hermione.

“Students raise their hands when they wish to speak in my class. And your name is?”

“Hermione Granger,” said Hermione.

“Well, Miss Granger, sorry I didn’t hear you clearly, you mean using defensive spells?” Professor Umbridge repeated with a little laugh. “Why, I can’t imagine any situation arising in my classroom that would require you to use a defensive spell, Miss Granger. You surely aren’t expecting to be attacked during class?”

“We’re not going to use magic?” Ron ejaculated loudly.

“As I said, hand up if you wish to speak!” Umbridge glanced at Ron. “And your name is...?”

“Ron Weasley,” said Ron, thrusting his hand into the air.

Professor Umbridge, smiling widely, turned her back on him to look at Harry and Hermione who were still standing.

“Mr. Potter, Ms. Granger, I don’t know who alarmed you with fibs, making you think that the Wizarding world today is as full of dangers as it was hundreds of years ago, and what you worry about is completely unnecessary, You are in Hogwarts now, in my class, you will never...”

Chapter 935: Ten Points from Gryffindor

“But, Professor, surely the whole point of Defense Against the Dark Arts is to practice defensive spells.” Hermione interrupted her.

“Please never interrupt when I speak in the future. And, speaking about the whole point of Defense Against the Dark Arts, are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Miss Granger?” asked Professor Umbridge in her falsely sweet voice.

“No, but...”

“Well then, I’m afraid you are not qualified to decide what the ‘whole point’ of any class is. Wizards much older and cleverer than you have devised our new program of study. There have been no questions in the morning class. And I can make it clear that you will be learning about defensive spells in a secure, risk-free way...”

“What use is that?” said Harry loudly, interrupting Umbridge again, and he was even angrier when he thought that Evan had compromised with Umbridge in the morning, “If we’re going to be attacked it won’t certainly be in a ...”

“Quiet!” sang Professor Umbridge. “I said don’t interrupt me, Mr. Potter, and hand up please.”

Harry thrust his fist in the air, and Professor Umbridge repeated the same trick again.

She promptly turned away from him, but now several other people had their hands up too.

“And your name is?” Professor Umbridge said to Dean.

“Dean Thomas.”

“Well, Mr. Thomas?”

“Well, it’s like Harry said, isn’t it?” said Dean. “If we’re going to be attacked, it won’t be risk-free...”

“I repeat,” said Professor Umbridge, taking a deep breath while smiling in a very irritating fashion at Dean, “do you expect to be attacked during my classes?”

“No, but—”

“That’s enough; I have to say that your class is the most problematic among all years. Apart from personal factors, these problems are based on the school itself. To be honest, I do not wish to criticize the way things have been run in this school.”

Professor Umbridge talked over Dean, an unconvincing smile stretching her wide mouth, and she gave a nasty little laugh. “but you have been exposed to some very irresponsible wizards in this class, very irresponsible indeed — not to mention; extremely dangerous half-breeds.”

“If you mean Professor Lupin,” piped up Dean Thomas angrily, “he was the best we ever had; and *Hogwarts Magic* he’s running with Evan is also my favorite newspaper.”

“Hand, Mr. Thomas! About that newspaper, I will talk to Mr. Mason, and let him carefully choose his staff and what content should be published. As for this class, as I was saying, you have been introduced to spells that have been complex, inappropriate to your age group, and potentially lethal. Look, you have been frightened into believing that you are likely to meet Dark attacks every other day

“No, we haven’t,” Hermione said angrily, and Harry beside her was also annoyed, “We just...”

“Your hand is not up, Miss Granger; and do not interrupt me!”

Hermione put up her hand, Harry held his up high too, and Professor Umbridge turned away from them.

“Apart from that dangerous half-breed and an escaped prisoner from Azkaban, I believe that my predecessor, that Moody, not only performed illegal curses in front of you, he actually performed them on you.”

“Professor Moody is the best, we learned a lot from him!” Harry shouted angrily, “Also, Sirius is not a fugitive who escaped from prison. You wronged him fifteen years ago ...”

“Your hand is not up, Mr. Potter!” trilled Professor Umbridge, the smile on her face fading, “I am not here to argue with you about the crazy things my predecessor did. This is not what we should discuss in this class, and your understanding is quite one-sided. Now, it is the view of the Ministry that a theoretical knowledge will be more than sufficient to get you through your examination, which, after all, is what school is all about. And your name is?” she added, staring at Parvati, whose hand had just shot up.

“Parvati Patil, and isn’t there a practical bit in our Defense Against the Dark Arts O.W.L.? Aren’t we supposed to show that we can actually do the countercurses and things?”

“Well, as long as you have studied the theory hard enough, there is no reason why you should not be able to perform the spells under carefully controlled examination

conditions," said Professor Umbridge dismissively. "If you can't, it will obviously be your own fault."

"Without ever practicing them before?" said Parvati incredulously. "Are you telling us that the first time we'll get to do the spells will be during our exam?"

"I repeat, as long as you have studied the theory hard enough..."

"And what good's theory going to be in the real world?" said Harry loudly, his fist in the air again.

His voice was very loud, almost roaring out with all his might.

Professor Umbridge looked up and said softly, "This is school, Mr. Potter, not the real world."

"So we're not supposed to be prepared for what's waiting out there?"

"There is nothing waiting out there, Mr. Potter. Your thoughts are very dangerous."

"Oh yeah?" said Harry.

His temper, which seemed to have been bubbling just beneath the surface all day, was reaching boiling point.

Indeed, just as he made up his mind to ask Umbridge, it had already erupted.

"Wake up, Mr. Potter. Who do you imagine wants to attack children like yourselves?" inquired Professor Umbridge in a horribly honeyed voice, with no smile on her face.

"Hmm, let's think ..." said Harry in a mock thoughtful voice, "maybe Lord Voldemort?!"

"Huuuhhh!" The class gasped, and some uttered little screams; Neville even slipped sideways off his stool.

Umbridge, however, did not flinch, as though she'd just heard a common name.

She didn't seem to be as afraid of the name as everyone else was, of Voldemort.

She was staring at Harry with a grimly satisfied expression on her face.

"Ten points from Gryffindor, Mr. Potter."

The classroom was silent and still. Everyone was staring at either Umbridge or Harry.

Harry was furious, and Hermione hurriedly stopped him, not letting him be so impulsive. She then understood the meaning of what Evan had said when he left at noon, why she was asked to keep an eye on Harry and not have a conflict with Umbridge. She kind of regretted she didn't do what Evan had said.

Harry was now almost exactly like Sirius before, a powder keg ready to explode at the slightest touch...

“Sit down, Mr. Potter!” said Professor Umbridge coldly.

Breathing heavily, Harry didn’t listen to her, and looked at Umbridge fiercely.

“Fine; now, let me make a few things quite plain.”

Professor Umbridge stood up and leaned toward them, her stubby-fingered hands splayed on her desk.

“I know what you’re trying to say. You have been told that a certain Dark wizard has returned from the dead...”

“He wasn’t dead,” said Harry angrily, “but yeah, he’s returned!”

“Shut up, Mr. Potter, you have already lost your House ten points, do not make matters worse for yourself,” said Professor Umbridge without looking at Harry, “As I was saying, you have been informed that a certain Dark wizard is at large once again. This is a lie.”

“It is NOT a lie!” said Harry. “Evan and I saw him, I fought him!”

“Ten more points from Gryffindor, Mr. Potter!” said Professor Umbridge triumphantly. “Mr. Mason has never said such a thing...”

“Go ahead, I don’t care, I just want to tell the truth now!” Harry yelled.

There was a commotion in the classroom, and everyone looked at Harry, wondering what had happened after he and Evan disappeared that day.

Although Dumbledore had told everyone that Voldemort was back, no one wanted to believe it.

But after that, Cedric did not transfer to another school. Some people said that he’d died; some said that he’d turned into a monster, and others saw Dementors and Death Eaters who were thought to have been dead for a long time in the castle. Everyone wanted to figure out the ins and outs of the matter.

“Come on, Harry!” said Hermione, her expression full of worry.

She hoped Harry would stop talking, the occasion was inappropriate, it was just infuriating Umbridge.

“Detention, Mr. Potter!” said Professor Umbridge harshly. “This evening. Five o’clock. My office. I repeat, this is a lie. The Ministry of Magic guarantees that you are not in danger from any Dark wizard. If you are still worried, by all means come and see me outside class hours. If someone is alarming you with fibs about reborn Dark wizards, I would like to hear about it. I am here to help. I am your friend. And now, you will kindly continue your reading. Page five, ‘Basics for Beginners.’ ”

Professor Umbridge sat down behind her desk again. Harry, however, was still standing up.

Ron seemed frozen, and Hermione tried to pull him down, but it didn’t work.

Everyone was staring at him, half-scared, half-fascinated.

“Harry, no, please, don’t!” Hermione tugged at his sleeve. But Harry jerked his arm, not wanting her to touch him.

“So, according to you, Cedric Diggory became a vampire of his own, did he? Mr. Barty Crouch also dropped dead of his own? And the game that day, the Death Eater Barty Crouch Jr. ...” Harry asked, his voice shaking.

There was a collective intake of breath from the class, for none of them, apart from Ron and Hermione, had ever heard Evan and Harry talk about what had happened on the day that Cedric had disappeared and the truth about his transfer. Had he become a vampire??!

That was big news, whopping news, no less shocking than Voldemort’s resurrection.

Harry shouldn’t have said these things, it just made things worse.

The whole class eagerly looked at him, hoping to get more information.

Professor Umbridge raised her eyes, too; and stared at Harry without a trace of a fake smile on her face.

“What happened to Cedric Diggory was an unfortunate accident,” she said coldly. “Those vampires...”

“They were all following Voldemort’s orders!” interrupted Harry. He could feel himself shaking. “The three of us have been transported there by that Portkey. Voldemort was going to kill him. He used Avada Kedavra on him...”

“Shut up, Mr. Potter, I’m not interested in your fables!” Professor Umbridge’s face was quite blank, looking at Harry, as though to see through him. Then she said, in her softest, most sweetly girlish voice, “Oh, yes. Come here, Mr. Potter, dear!”

Harry kicked his chair aside, strode around Ron and Hermione and up to the teacher’s desk.

He felt so angry he did not care what happened next.

Professor Umbridge pulled a small roll of pink parchment out of her handbag, stretched it out on the desk, dipped her quill into a bottle of ink, and started scribbling, hunched over so that Harry could not see what she was writing.

Nobody spoke. After a minute or so she rolled up the parchment and tapped it with her wand; it sealed itself seamlessly so that Harry could not open it.

“Take this to Professor McGonagall, dear,” said Professor Umbridge, holding out the note to him. “Go now!”

He took it from her without saying a word and left the room, not even looking back at Ron and Hermione, and slamming the classroom door shut behind him, leaving everyone stunned in a solemn atmosphere.

“Fine, now class, keep quiet, and continue reading Page five, ‘Basics for Beginners.’” said Umbridge in a coquettish voice. A satisfied smile appeared on her face again.

There was no need for Evan to have dinner to know what happened in the fifth year’s Defense Against the Dark Arts class from other people, because this scene had been watched by Peeves lying outside the classroom, and he immediately spread it out.

“Cedric became a vampire!”

“Potter himself said that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has returned!”

“Potty Wee Potter faced Professor Umbridge in class, openly defying the Ministry of Magic!”

Peeves even came up with a little song of his own;

“Oh, most think he’s barking, the Potty wee lad,

But some are more kindly and think he’s just sad,

But Peevesy knows better and says that he’s mad.

Oh, the Potty wee lad!”

Peeves suddenly burst into the Charms teacher’s room, Cackling madly, and revealed everything, then he went straight through the wall and left.

He quickly traveled throughout the school, and the incident caused quite a stir.

The atmosphere in the classroom was boiling like hot water. Everyone was not in the mood for class; they were all discussing the matter.

Along with that, Evan once again became the focus of attention.

Because on that day, he was the only one who’d disappeared with Harry and witnessed the entire event...

Evan had a headache. Harry was truly impulsive. He’d clearly told Hermione and Ron, but to no avail.

What troubled him even more was that because of his performance that morning, Harry seemed angry and didn’t intend to speak to him!

When he was having dinner, he saw Evan coming over, angrily took his schoolbag and left directly, leaving the others to look awkwardly at Evan.

Such a situation would have been considered normal if it happened with Ron, but it was the first time with Harry...

Chapter 937: Using the Imperius Curse

“Seriously, what’s going on with him?” said Evan in surprise, sitting next to Hermione.

“Haven’t you heard about what happened in our Defense Against the Dark Arts class this afternoon? I thought the whole school knew by now.”

Thanks to Peeves, the news about Harry's shouting match with Umbridge seemed to have traveled exceptionally fast even by Hogwarts standards.

Now, everyone in the Great Hall was whispering and discussing the matter. None of them seemed to mind Harry overhearing what they were saying. On the contrary, it was as though they were hoping he would get angry and start shouting again, so that they could hear his story firsthand.

But after Harry left and Evan arrived, these voices quickly turned into hushed whispers.

"Well, I heard that Harry was given detention by Umbridge this evening," said Evan.

"More precisely, he'll go to that woman's room every evening of this week. It's written in the note Harry was sent with to Professor McGonagall. Professor McGonagall also agreed. As his teacher, she has every right to give Harry detention."

"I remember warning you at lunch, not to get excited, not to confront her face-to-face," said Evan with a frown.

"You did say that, but who could hold back in that situation?" said Ron in frustration. "You have no idea. She belittled Professor Lupin, Sirius, and Mad-Eye right in front of us, calling Lupin a dangerous half-breed. Oh, I just don't understand; how can Dumbledore have let this happen? How can the school employ someone who's actually refusing to let us do magic as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher? What's Dumbledore playing at?"

"Just as a side note, otherwise that woman would come anyway," said Evan. "Fudge would definitely interfere with Hogwarts, and this position allows her more convenience. No one wants the job of the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor since it's jinxed. But what she said about Lupin and the others was really going too far!"

"And that's not the end of it; she's trying to get people to spy for her. She said she wanted us to come and tell her if we hear anyone saying You-Know-Who's back," said Ron darkly.

"Of course she's here to spy on us all, that's obvious, why else would Fudge have wanted her to come?"

"Forget about that for now!" Evan quickly interjected. "What I don't get is why Harry looked at me strangely just now."

Hermione and Ron exchanged a nervous and uneasy glance.

"Well, how should I put it...? Harry thinks you've been too weak in this matter," said Hermione cautiously, weighing her words. "He believes that we should speak the truth and reveal everything, instead of compromising with Umbridge and those who oppose us."

“What does he want to do? Tell the truth, directly confront Umbridge and the students who oppose us, and drive out half the school from Hogwarts?” said Evan in astonishment. “I’m afraid even Dumbledore doesn’t have that ability.”

“But at the very least, we shouldn’t compromise. That’s probably what he’s thinking,” Hermione added. “Don’t blame him; Harry is just blinded by anger. It’s not just directed at you, Evan. I think he seems upset with Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall too.”

If that was the case, it was even worse. He couldn’t get angry with whoever didn’t support him or do things his way.

Harry already had this problem, and it seemed to be getting more serious now. Was it Voldemort’s influence?

Of course, Harry was not bad-natured. As long as he was given enough time to calm down or explain things to him calmly, he could understand what was going on. Unlike some people who couldn’t be reasoned with at all...

“Going on like this is not an option. We should really do something to that woman,” Ron looked around cautiously. “I think we should take some extraordinary measures. How about having her under the Imperius Curse?”

After being controlled by the Imperius Curse for several years, he was particularly sensitive to that spell.

In Ron’s opinion, that was probably the best way to solve the current predicament, even though it was not so honorable...

“You’re crazy, Ron!” Hermione exclaimed, “How could you even think that?!”

“I just feel that this curse would be more effective, that’s all” Ron muttered softly, seeming to be frightened by his own thoughts.

For some reason he didn’t know, he felt that ever since Voldemort’s return, his mind had been filled with various dreadful ideas.

Sometimes, when he watched the Order of the Phoenix and their unresolved problems, he couldn’t help but feel annoyed. If he used the Imperius Curse, Veritaserum, or other Dark magic, these problems could be easily resolved.

“The Imperius Curse is not all-powerful. In order to prevent resistance and escape, we would have to cast the curse every day. But doing so would cause significant damage to a person’s soul, and we would also have to limit her contact with others,” said Evan, carefully considering Ron’s suggestion and dismissing it. “It’s hard to say about others, but Dumbledore would definitely notice if we did something like that. He wouldn’t let us go down that path.”

“What should we do then?” said Ron discontentedly. “Just continue like this? Do nothing?”

“We can simply refrain from opposing her in class and privately do things she wouldn’t want us to do,” said Evan. “As long as we don’t get caught, believe me, these days won’t last too long.”

Evan finished eating quickly and prepared to join Hermione and Ron to find Harry and explain the situation to him.

However, even when they returned to the common room, they didn’t see Harry.

Rain pounded on the windowpanes. The common room wasn’t crowded, with only Fred, George, Lee Jordan, and a knot of innocent-looking first years sitting in a corner, behaving furtively.

They seemed to be purposely hiding here while everyone was downstairs having dinner, conducting illegal secret experiments on human subjects.

Each of the first years was chewing something that seemed to have come out of a large paper bag that Fred was holding.

The next second, one by one, as though hit over the heads with invisible mallets, the first years were slumping unconscious in their seats; some slid right onto the floor, others merely hung over the arms of their chairs, their tongues lolling out.

“My God, what are they doing?” said Hermione in disbelief, looking furious. “They’ve gone too far!”

Eyes wide, squaring her shoulders, she marched directly over to where Fred and George now stood with clipboards, closely observing the unconscious first years.

Evan hurriedly followed; Ron hesitated, and decided to go back to the dormitory to see if Harry was there.

Chapter 938: Dangerous Experiments on Humans

Hermione walked up to Fred and George aggressively, and Evan followed her with a wry smile.

The effect of these Fainting Fancies was much stronger than before. What on earth had the two of them put in them?

In fact, Evan had provided the original formula, and Fred and George used it as a basis to develop many new variations.

The way Hermione reacted, Evan felt that it was best not to speak or let her know about this matter.

“That’s enough!” Hermione said forcefully to Fred and George, both of whom looked up in mild surprise.

“Yeah, you’re right,” said George, nodding, “this dosage looks strong enough, doesn’t it?”

“It should be reduced appropriately. We don’t need to put people in a coma.”

"I said enough, I told you this morning, you can't test your rubbish on students!"

"This is not rubbish." George said, dissatisfied.

"And we're paying them!" said Fred indignantly.

"I don't care, it could be dangerous!"

"Rubbish," said Fred. "It's not dangerous at all."

"Calm down, Hermione, they're fine!" said Lee reassuringly as he walked from first year to first year, inserting purple sweets into their open mouths.

"Yeah, look, they're coming round now," said George.

A few of the first years were indeed stirring. Several looked so shocked to find themselves lying on the floor, or dangling off their chairs, that for sure, Fred and George had not warned them what the sweets were going to do.

"Feel all right?" said George kindly to a small dark-haired girl lying at his feet.

"I, I think so," she said shakily.

"Excellent," said Fred happily.

But the next second Hermione had snatched both his clipboard and the paper bag of Fainting Fancies from his hands.

"It is NOT excellent!" said Hermione angrily.

"Of course it is, they're alive, aren't they?" said Fred angrily.

"You can't do this, what if you made one of them really ill?"

"We're not going to make them ill, we've already tested them all on ourselves, this is just to see if everyone reacts the same..."

"Besides, this is the formula Evan gave us; you can ask him if you don't believe it," George added.

Immediately, Evan saw Hermione turn her head angrily towards him.

He smiled awkwardly; Hermione glared at him, and then turned her head back quickly.

"I don't care who you got the formula from, or whether your rubbish is risky or not, I'm telling you both clearly now, if you don't stop doing it, I'm going to..."

"Put us in detention?" said Fred in an I'd-like-to-see-you-try-it voice.

"Make us write lines?" said George, smirking, and onlookers all over the room were laughing.

"Oh, come on, Evan, do something about her. Take her away!" said Fred.

He shouldn't have said that. Upon hearing his words, Hermione's face turned red instantly.

She drew herself up to her full height; her eyes were narrowed and her bushy hair seemed to crackle with electricity.

"I will write to your mother!" she said, her voice quivering with anger, "tell her about everything you've done at school, and tell her that you're experimenting with these dangerous things on first years."

"You wouldn't," said George, horrified, taking a step back from her.

"Oh, yes, I would," said Hermione grimly. "I tell you once again, I can't stop you eating the stupid things yourselves, but you're not giving them to first years."

Fred and George looked thunderstruck. It was clear that as far as they were concerned, Hermione's threat was way below the belt.

They tried to seek help from Evan, but, faced with an enraged Hermione, Evan wasn't even able to protect himself now.

If George hadn't quickly mentioned that it was Evan who'd provided the recipe, and Fred hadn't been mean enough to ask him to keep Hermione in check, he could still have interceded for them both, but there was nothing he could do now.

With a last threatening look at them, Hermione thrust Fred's clipboard and the bag of Fancies back into his arms and strode to the stairs of the dormitory, dragging Evan along with her.

"Well, I just found out who the real culprit is!" said Hermione angrily.

"I just provided appropriate help to the two of them and shortened their research time..."

Evan wanted to tell Hermione that even without his help, Fred and George could have developed these dangerous Fainting Fancies.

"Appropriate help? You provided them with the formula, sales channels, and a lot of research funds. Without your help, it would be impossible for the two of them to develop to this point and produce more than a hundred dangerous products," said Hermione. "I must have been out of my mind to agree to let you use part of the profits from *Hogwarts Magic News* to fund their inventions."

"Okay, Hermione, I promise I'll never do it again!" Evan said hastily.

Fred and George were doing fine now, and even without his help, they could continue to develop rapidly.

As they said, what they needed now was to leave Hogwarts as soon as possible and open a shop in Diagon Alley.

“Hmph, you have to make sure that they don’t use these things on first years anymore. If you want, you can use your own body to experiment,” said Hermione, taking a step forward and getting close to Evan, “If I find out again...”

Because they were so close, the atmosphere became tense. Hermione waved her small fist, indicating that if she caught Fred and George conducting dangerous experiments on others again, she would push Evan. Was that a punishment?

Or perhaps Hermione had some ace up her sleeve, and pushing Evan would be the ultimate punishment...

Just then, Ron came out of the bedroom.

“Are you done?” He was visibly relieved to see that Fred, George, and Lee Jordan had disappeared, leaving only a bunch of unresponsive first-years lying on the couch. He did not dare to confront Fred and George.

“We’re done, thanks for your support, Ron,” said Hermione acidly.

“You handled it fine by yourself,” Ron mumbled; then resumed his normal voice, “Harry isn’t in the bedroom, I think he’s gone to Professor Umbridge’s room. Remember, she asked him to report at five o’clock.”

“Oh, right. She also invited me to have tea tonight,” Evan quickly said, avoiding Hermione’s gaze. “I think I’d better go now and prevent her from bullying Harry or getting into an argument....”

Chapter 939: Umbridge's Office

Harry left the Great Hall with his schoolbag on his back and walked up the marble staircase two steps at a time.

The indescribable anger that had just flared so unexpectedly still blazed inside him.

The vision of Evan, Ron, and Hermione’s shocked faces afforded him a sense of deep satisfaction.

As he gradually calmed down, he felt a bit regretful.

Harry knew that he shouldn’t be angry with Evan and lose his temper, but an uncontrollable restlessness had surged through his body.

The frequent pain in his scar had been bothering him lately, but he couldn’t talk about it.

The school was full of gossip, and his once-trusted friends were full of mistrust. Ron and Hermione were bickering all the time, the Umbridge woman was full of malice, and Professor McGonagall wanted him to keep his head down, Dumbledore seemed indifferent to him, and Evan let things unfold...

It was the same in the morning, it was the same at noon, it was the same at night, and it was the same when he returned to the bedroom. He had nowhere to escape.

Under all the pressure, he felt like he was about to be driven crazy.

Harry's pace slowed down, and he suddenly realized that he had nowhere to go.

"Go and sit in the library for a while, then go to that woman's place for detention and apologize to Evan when back in the evening," He thought pitifully, *"I need to control my temper, clear my brain, and think of nothing..."*

At this moment, Peeves emerged from an empty classroom wall, juggling several inkwells.

"Oh, it's Potty Wee Potter!" cackled Peeves. "Why aren't you eating? What are you doing here?"

He allowed two of the inkwells to fall to the ground where they smashed and splattered the walls with ink.

Harry jumped backward out of the way with a snarl, "Get out of it, Peeves!"

"Crackpot's feeling cranky; I saw it all this afternoon. I told everyone," said Peeves, pursuing Harry along the corridor, leering as he zoomed along above him.

"Oh, most think he's barking, the Potty wee lad,

But some are more kindly and think he's just sad,

But Peevesy knows better and says that he's mad."

"SHUT UP!" Harry yelled, walking down a narrow path.

The indescribable anger in his body came out again, and he drew his wand, ready to teach Peeves a lesson.

He had learned this magic from Sirius back then, and knew how to attack Peeves with it. But the cunning Peeves didn't keep up.

Harry passed the large picture of Sir Cadogan.

When he saw him, Sir Cadogan drew his sword and brandished it fiercely at Harry, who ignored him.

He was really fed up with all of it. They were all the same. Even the ghosts and the portraits were so hateful.

It was hard to imagine that just a few weeks ago; he had been missing all of this.

"Come back, you scurvy dog, stand fast and fight!" yelled Sir Cadogan in a muffled voice from behind his visor, but Harry merely walked on, and when Sir Cadogan attempted to follow him by running into a neighboring picture, he was rebuffed by its inhabitant, a large and angry-looking wolfhound.

"Oy, Potter!" said a loud and angry voice just as he was walking to the library door.

"What now?" Harry turned his head impatiently, almost at the limit.

He saw Angelina Johnson standing on the nearby staircase, apparently having followed him up.

She seemed angrier than him, ready to unleash thunder at any moment.

"I'll tell you what now," she said, marching straight up to him and poking him hard in the chest with her finger. "I've heard all about it. How come you've landed yourself in detention for five o'clock on Friday?"

"What?" Harry was taken aback for a moment, and then remembered. "Oh yeah, Keeper tryouts!"

"Now he remembers!" snarled Angelina. "Didn't I tell you I wanted to do a tryout with the whole team, and find someone who fitted in with everyone? Didn't I tell you I'd booked the Quidditch pitch specially? And now you've decided you're not going to be there! "

"I didn't decide not to be there!" said Harry, stung by the injustice of these words. "I got detention from that Umbridge woman, just because I told her the truth about You-Know-Who."

"Well, you can just go straight to her and ask her to let you off on Friday," said Angelina fiercely, "and I don't care how you do it, tell her You-Know-Who's a figment of your imagination if you like, just make sure you're there!"

With that, she stormed away, leaving Harry standing there alone.

Three second-year girls came out of the library, and immediately huddled in a corner, keeping their distance from him.

The way they acted, as if Harry would pounce on them and bite them hard, made him actually have that impulse...

He sighed, though he felt that it was unlikely that Umbridge would let him off on Friday, it was better to give it a try.

Angelina was right, he couldn't miss Friday's tryouts, and Quidditch was his only pleasure.

That being the case, he'd better come to Umbridge's office early to make a good impression on her.

Harry turned around and walked towards Umbridge's office.

He knocked on the door, only to hear a sugary voice shout, "Come in."

Harry entered cautiously, looking around.

He had known this office under its previous occupants.

In the days when Gilderoy Lockhart had lived here it had been plastered in beaming portraits of its owner.

When Lupin had occupied it, it was likely you would meet some fascinating Dark creature in a cage or tank if you came to call.

During the time of Sirius, it was full of all kinds of interesting Auror props and delicious candies.

And In the impostor Moody's days it had been packed with various instruments and artifacts for the detection of wrongdoing and concealment, although they were all damaged. When the real Mad-Eye returned, he threw away all those things and replaced them with a new batch.

Now, however, it looked totally unrecognizable.

The surfaces had all been draped in lacy covers and cloths. There were several vases full of dried flowers, each residing on its own doily, and on one of the walls was a collection of ornamental plates, each decorated with a large technicolor kitten wearing a different bow around its neck.

These were so foul that Harry stared at them, transfixed, until Professor Umbridge spoke again...

Chapter 940: The Black Quill

"Good evening, Mr. Potter."

Harry started and looked around. He had not noticed her at first because she was wearing a luridly flowered set of robes that blended only too well with the tablecloth on the desk behind her.

"I, uh, good evening, Professor Umbridge," Harry said stiffly.

"Well, sit down," she said with her habitual fake smile, pointing toward a small table draped in lace beside which she had drawn up a straight-backed chair. A piece of blank parchment lay on the table, apparently waiting for him.

"Er," said Harry, without moving. "Professor Umbridge? Er ... before we start, I...I wanted to ask you a ... a favor."

"Oh, what?" Her bulging eyes narrowed.

"Well I'm on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. And I was supposed to be at the tryouts for the new Keeper at five o'clock on Friday and I was wondering whether I could skip detention that night and do it another night instead," Harry blurted out, looking at Umbridge's expression, and added nervously, "Or maybe I can do one more detention..."

His voice was getting lower and lower, because Umbridge's appearance told him long before he reached the end of his sentence that it was no good.

"Oh, no, Mr. Potter, this is not a negotiation or a deal," said Umbridge, smiling so widely that she looked as though she had just swallowed a particularly juicy fly. "Oh no, no, no. This is your punishment for spreading evil, nasty, attention-seeking stories, Mr. Potter, and punishments certainly cannot be adjusted to suit the guilty one's convenience. No, you will come here at five o'clock tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after, and on Friday too, and you will do your detentions as planned. I think it rather a good thing that you are missing something you really want to do. It ought to reinforce the lesson I am trying to teach you and make you aware of your misdoings."

Harry felt the blood surge to his head and heard a thumping noise in his ears. So according to her, he was being here in detention because he'd told evil, nasty, attention-seeking stories?

But what he'd said was the truth. He had told the truth!

Umbridge was watching him with her head slightly to one side, still smiling widely, as though she knew exactly what he was thinking and was waiting to see whether he would start shouting again.

That look seemed to be a silent provocation, as though to say "Will you ever dare do it again?"

Harry really wanted to shout or even pounce, there were only the two of them here...

With a massive effort, he looked away from her, dropped his schoolbag beside the straight-backed chair, and sat down.

"There, Mr. Potter! It looks like detention has an effect, and we're getting better at controlling our temper already, aren't we? Now, you are going to be doing some lines for me, Mr. Potter. No, not with your quill," said Umbridge sweetly, as Harry bent down to open his bag; and she quickly added, "You're going to be using a rather special one of mine. Here you are."

She handed him a long, thin black quill with an unusually sharp point that was on the table.

"Well, I want you to write '*I must not tell lies*'

," she told him softly, with a smile.

"How many times?" Harry asked, with a creditable imitation of politeness.

"Oh, as long as it takes for the message to *sink in*," said Umbridge sweetly. "Off you go."

She moved over to her desk, sat down, and bent over a stack of parchment that looked like essays for marking.

Harry raised the sharp black quill, and then realized what was missing.

"You haven't given me any ink," he said.

"Oh, you won't need ink," said Professor Umbridge with the merest suggestion of a laugh in her voice.

Harry placed the point of the quill on the paper and wrote: *I must not tell lies*.

The next second, he let out a gasp of pain. The words had appeared on the parchment in what appeared to be shining red ink.

At the same time, the words had appeared on the back of Harry's right hand, cut into his skin as though traced there by a scalpel. Yet even as he stared at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth.

Harry looked around at Umbridge. She was watching him, her wide, toadlike mouth stretched in a smile.

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing,” said Harry quietly.

He looked back at the parchment, placed the quill upon it once more, wrote *I must not tell lies*, and felt the searing pain on the back of his hand for a second time; once again the words had been cut into his skin, once again they healed over seconds later.

And on it went. Again and again Harry wrote the words on the parchment in what he soon came to realize was not ink, but his own blood.

And again and again the words were cut into the back of his hand, healed, and then reappeared the next time he set quill to parchment.

Time passed minute by minute, maybe half an hour; but it felt like centuries to Harry.

He gritted his teeth and remained silent, not wanting to show the slightest sign of weakness, not even if he had to sit here all night, cutting open his own hand with this quill.

Knock, knock, knock, there was a knock on the door.

“Come in,” said Umbridge sweetly, and Harry stopped to look at the door.

Suddenly, his eyes widened in disbelief as he saw Evan enter the room.

“Good evening, Professor Umbridge!” Evan also froze for a moment!

He gasped nervously as the decor of the room sent shivers down his spine; it was too terrifying, reminding him of a combination of Madam Puddifoot’s Tea Shop and the Dursleys’ living room, filled with vivid red everywhere.

Even Umbridge’s fiery red flowered set of robes seemed to blend in with the surroundings.

Then, he saw Harry sitting at the table, staring at him, completely out of place with everything else in the room.

“Evan, what are you doing here?” Harry asked instinctively.

“I invited Mr. Mason over for tea. I want to have a chat with the school’s new Head Boy,” said Umbridge with a smile. “Please continue, Mr. Potter, don’t mind the two of us.”

Although she said so, Harry still focused his attention, wanting to know what they were going to talk about.

He had no idea how Evan ended up here, and now he was going to have tea with Umbridge? Had Evan gone crazy?!

Or had they reached some kind of compromise?

Umbridge walked to the round tea table by the fireplace, which was already set with tea and cookies.

“Come over, Mr. Mason, don’t stand there,” she said warmly, her wide mouth forming a smile, gesturing for Evan to sit across from her, “I’ve been wanting to talk to you for a while.”

“Well, can’t we ask Harry to join?” Evan asked, eyeing the quill in Harry’s hand.

Following Evan’s gaze, Umbridge noticed that Harry had been looking at them, and shook her head.

“No, that won’t do. Mr. Potter is currently serving his punishment in detention, and he must be diligent in his copying.” She took out her wand and waved it with a jerk, casting a charm to prevent eavesdropping, enveloping the tea table. Harry couldn’t hear anything anymore.