

Umbridge had chosen for him — he'd expected her to be more upset about his blatant disregard for the Ministry's authority. He hadn't even talked that much about Voldemort in class.

Fudge had definitely sent her to keep an eye on Harry, to try and shut him up and get him to *conform* to the Ministry's party line.

Good luck to them, there.

An hour passed, then two. The sky in the window turned pitch black. Still, Harry showed absolutely no reaction to the pain, turning over his parchment to write on the other side when he ran out of room. He meditated as he wrote, wondering when he would next have free time to practice his animagus transformation. Never again, if his homework load was anything to go by.

At last, Umbridge cleared her throat. "Come here, Mr Potter."

Harry went to her, holding out his hand for inspection. The skin had healed over, but it was red and tender, like a bad sunburn. Umbridge pressed her fingers to it, and looked annoyed when Harry didn't so much as twitch.

Really, she'd have to do better than that.

Letting him go with a snide remark about the message *sinking in* more in tomorrow's detention, Umbridge didn't stop Harry when he stuffed the sheet of parchment in his own bag, leaving the office. He didn't know much about blood magic, but he knew enough not to leave his own blood lying around in the enemy's grasp.

Pausing in a hidden passageway on the way up to Gryffindor Tower, Harry murmured a Healing charm over the back of his hand, sighing quietly in relief when the redness began to fade. It was practically gone by the time he got back up to the common room, where he found Neville and Ginny were still up, sat at the table by the slowly dying fire.

"You guys didn't have to wait up for me." It was midnight already — Umbridge had kept him writing lines for almost seven whole hours.

"Had homework to do, figured we might as well. How was it?" Neville asked, shifting his books over to make table space as Harry began to empty his school bag, looking for his Herbology textbook. He needed sleep, but he could at the very least write the notes he'd made in his head during his detention.

"Just lines," he replied dismissively, hoping they wouldn't notice the tightness to his smile.

He wished Draco still had the other half of the two-way mirror. Or that he'd been able to pass it back to Sirius by now. He would give anything to sit and talk to one of them — even if he couldn't tell them about the Blood Quill, he just wanted to feel that reassurance, that comfort.

But both of the mirrors were still in his trunk, and he had an *obscene* amount of homework to do before he could even think about relaxing.