

“That’s easier said than done,” young Snape pointed out. “He got let go from the factory again.” A flash of pain, a wince. Lily’s smile was gone, replaced with righteous fury blazing in those vivid green eyes.

“What did he do to you?”

Harry saw those dark eyes widen a fraction. Saw Snape scrambling to think of a lie, something Lily might believe, anything to get her off the subject.

“Lily! Mummy says it’s time to come in, now! I— oh. You’re with the *freak*.” And that could only be one person, with that sort of contempt. Harry looked across the park to see a girl a couple of years older than Lily, her blonde hair cut in a wavy bob, a look of disgust on her face as she stared at them. Petunia Evans, aged thirteen, and just as hateful as always. She had the same accent as her sister, though her words were clipped and over-annunciated, like she was already trying to train herself out of it and into the crisp RP accent Harry knew her to have as an adult. “Come away, Lily.”

“Leave him alone, Tunie!” Lily argued, glaring at her sister. “You’re just jealous because we get to go to magic school and you don’t!”

A sneer on Petunia’s face, so cold it made Lily flinch. “Why would I want to go to such an *awful* place with a couple of *unnatural weirdos* like you? I’ll be glad to see the back of you. Maybe Mum and Dad can ask that old man if they can keep you over the holidays, too.”

And then Harry felt a sharp shove, and he was back in his own mind, his body feeling even more worn and leaden than ever. “I’m sorry,” he gasped, looking up awkwardly at Snape’s face. It was remarkably blank. “I... I got carried away.” He hadn’t intended to linger so long in the same memory, but his mother was *right there*, tiny and fierce and so incredible.

“I could have removed you at any time,” Snape replied — his way of assuring Harry that he had not overstepped. “You must learn not to get trapped in memories, however. No matter how... appealing they are. Had I been of the mind to, I could have caged you there for as long as I wanted. Especially since you did not keep any connection to your own mind — a true Legilimens needs to be able to slip into another’s mind while remaining in their own, to avoid leaving themselves unguarded. Or arousing suspicion.”

That made sense; when Dumbledore tried to sneakily use Legilimency on people, he didn’t go all slack and vacant-eyed like Harry no doubt had. He could hold entire conversations while rummaging through peoples’ heads!

“It’s harder than I thought it would be.”

A flicker of a smile crossed Snape’s lips. “You have only seen it done well, and that makes it look easy.”

Snape leaned back in his chair, no doubt giving Harry a little time to recover from what he’d seen. Harry’s head was full of his mother’s voice, her face; it was so different than seeing pictures.