

“I was just a kid,” he cut her off. “A scared, lonely kid who had never had friends before, never had proper family, and had no idea what any of that was supposed to look like. And yeah, maybe you two were kids as well, but you still should have known better than to fake friendship with someone just because an old man tells you it’s for the good of the wizarding world.”

“We weren’t faking! Not really!” Hermione protested. Harry just arched an eyebrow.

“I’m supposed to believe that, am I? Along with all the other lies you’ve fed me over the years? You called me a blood purist, Hermione.” She flinched, squeezing Ron’s hand. Even now, Harry couldn’t quiet the voice in the back of his mind that insisted they were only trying to befriend him now because he’d *won*, because he was *famous* — because Hermione had realised she’d burned bridges with just about every future influential member of the Wizengamot, and if she didn’t get back in his good graces she could kiss goodbye to her dream of taking the Ministry by storm.

He looked up at the Weasley matriarch, his heart clenching with an entirely different betrayal.

“And you, Mrs Weasley — you were an adult. You were a *mother*, and you looked at me, half-starved and terrified to do something wrong in your house because I didn’t know what the punishment would be, and you *pretended* to welcome me into your family. I’m lucky your husband and the rest of your kids were genuine — if all of it had been a lie, I don’t think I would have survived.”

He swallowed thickly, feeling the gentle press of Sirius at his shoulder, quietly supportive.

“You let me go back to the Dursleys every summer when you *knew* I wasn’t happy there, because Dumbledore told you. And you tried to control me, to keep me oblivious just like he wanted, to guilt me into thinking the whole world was my responsibility. Then you *believed* an old man that told you I was evil because of something in my scar, that I had to die for Voldemort to be destroyed. Without even thinking to talk to me about it. And that’s not even mentioning how awful you were to Sirius — *in his own house*, even!”

Mrs Weasley’s gaze flickered to the dog animagus, filling with guilt.

“I’m aware that our families are connected, in more ways than one,” Harry continued. “I won’t be able to avoid the three of you. I’m not going to make anyone choose between me and you. Which is more grace than you gave me,” he added sharply. “I can be civil. Friendly, even, at family gatherings. But you’re delusional if you think I’ll ever trust the three of you ever again. And if I were you, Mrs Weasley, I’d take a closer look at your relationship with the rest of your children, before you lose them forever.”

Trying not to let his breath shake, he exhaled slowly, glancing back at Sirius. “Let’s go home, yeah?” He was so very done with being out in public.

“Sure thing, pup,” Sirius assured quietly. He nodded politely to the trio, then steered Harry away towards the apparition point.

Harry’s heart didn’t stop racing until long after they’d walked away.