

bows and sprawling cutely. As Harry walked in, it felt like a hundred sets of eyes were on him; a shiver ran down his spine.

At the desk, Umbridge stood, her overly sweet smile in place once more. “Good evening, Mr Potter,” she said, staring him down until he replied in kind. “Please, sit.”

There was a single desk opposite hers, with a blank piece of parchment on the surface. Harry sat, watching her expectantly. “You’re going to be writing lines for me, this evening. With a rather special quill of mine,” she added, when he moved to grab his own. He watched as she pulled out a jet black quill with a wickedly sharp nib, setting it on the desk in front of him.

“May I have some ink, please, Professor?” he asked evenly. For some reason, that made her giggle.

“Oh, you won’t be needing any ink,” she told him, smiling. “I want you to write ‘*I must not tell lies*’.”

Harry *almost* asked her to please elaborate on the lies he had supposedly told, but even he could recognise that now was not the time for sass. He’d just promised Angelina he wouldn’t get more detentions, after all. “How many times?” he asked instead, mind already on the huge load of homework he had to do.

“As long as the message takes to *sink in*,” Umbridge said, giggling once more. Harry screwed up his nose in confusion, but shrugged, and began to write.

His breath hitched as a sharp pain began on the back of his right hand. The words he wrote on paper — appearing in shiny, dark red ink — also carved themselves into the back of his hand. They healed over immediately, leaving little more than a slight red patch, but it was enough.

Umbridge watched him over her clasped hands, sat behind her desk looking entirely too smug.

Harry put his head down, and kept writing.

He’d heard about these quills — Blood Quills, Bill had called them, when he’d once been explaining to Harry how magically binding contracts were signed. They were used to sign in blood, to prove a person was who they said they were. They were *not* designed for repetitive use.

The pain grew sharper with every line, every time the words reopened and re-healed on the back of his hand. But he didn’t flinch, nor shake, nor slow down for even a second, acting as if he was writing with an ordinary quill.

If Umbridge thought pain was the way to control Harry, she had another thing coming. This was *nothing* compared to what he had grown up with. After ten years and one and a half summers with the Dursleys, Harry was an expert at ignoring pain in order to complete tasks.

He began to tune out the continuous burn and sting of the quill cutting into his flesh, mentally composing his Herbology essay while he wrote the simple lines. It was interesting, the words