

it in peoples' eyes — those who knew the truth about Dumbledore, those who were on Harry's side, all of them sat with varying degrees of veiled rage as Albus and Moody and Molly insisted that Harry was under Dark influences and needed to be *managed carefully*.

It would be so easy to just get up and leave. All of them, make their stand, make Albus realise how many of them were no longer working for him. Leave the man and his sycophants to their slow-brewing disaster, turn away and get some *real* work done. Already they were having meetings of their own, gathering at Seren Du or Grimmauld whenever they could manage, discussing their continued efforts to get at-risk people to safety. The Order knew nothing about those in hiding at the Pottery, or Malfoy Manor, or the handful of other properties they had begun using all over the country. They certainly didn't know about their contact with Mrs Zabini, with Mr and Mrs Delacour, with some of Charlie's friends in Romania and some of Viktor Krum's teammates in Bulgaria — all working to help smuggle people out of the country, if there was truly too much danger for them to stay.

They would get so much more work done if they could leave the Order to crumble, and it was tempting. But Remus knew they couldn't. They all knew they couldn't.

As long as Harry was outwardly taking a stand against Dumbledore, even if he had not yet started to dismantle the man's reputation, he would need as many of them as possible on the headmaster's good side to stay in the loop, in case Albus' plans took a drastic turn. Right now, he just wanted to keep Harry out of the way, oblivious — hardly much different than previous years, in all honesty, except for his insistence that Harry was dangerous.

But the moment that changed, the moment he decided Harry was *too* dangerous, they needed to know. They needed to be ready.

Harry's life could depend on it.

.-..

Slughorn's Monday night supper was just as dreadfully boring as Harry anticipated it would be. This one was a more formal sit-down affair, and much to his dismay Harry had been seated between Hermione Granger and Cormac McLaggen. Cormac had no desire to talk to Harry after being denied a place on the quidditch team, so Harry was stuck trying to ignore Hermione's attempts at befriending him — clearly someone had told her she needed to be nice to him again, because it was a drastic turn from her previous behaviour.

How stupid did Dumbledore think Harry was?

Annoyingly, with Hermione nattering away at him, Harry didn't even get much of a chance to talk to Slughorn. Not that he knew what he might say. He had no idea how he was supposed to get information from the man, especially when he barely knew what information he was looking for to begin with.

If he outright asked Slughorn about horcruxes, he'd go straight to Dumbledore, and Harry would be screwed.