

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw Remus' eyes flash gold, and he knew with a sudden sick feeling that he'd said too much. His mostly-for-show temper tantrum had hit too close to the truth, in his desperation to make these people feel *some* sort of guilt for what they'd done all summer.

And maybe, deep down, he wanted them to know the truth. Wanted them to be aware of what he put up with every time he left Hogwarts, what he'd survived for years before learning about magic.

But he didn't want to be there to watch them react to it.

"I'm going to bed," he muttered, chair legs screeching against the tile. Just as he opened the door, several people called his name — and the velvet curtain covering Mrs Black's portrait flung wide open, revealing a large painting of an older woman with venomous eyes.

"*Scum! Blood traitors and filth, in my house!*" she screeched, beginning an impressive tirade. Harry ignored her, storming up the stairs to his bedroom. Merlin, he was glad Sirius hadn't made him share with Ron.

Slamming the door shut only slightly muffled the portrait's cries, and it was several minutes before things went silent again. Harry sat on his bed with his knees tucked up to his chest, his hands pressed against his face. His scar ached, and the anger was still raw within him. When he took several deep breaths, he could feel the oily taint of the horcrux within him mixed up in it all — Voldemort was angry too, and it was feeding into Harry's rage. That explained a lot.

Not all of it was Voldemort, though. Most of it was Harry. He couldn't help it — here were people who were supposed to care about him, think of him like *family*, and they were all too happy to leave him to fend for himself at the Dursleys' and not think twice about it. Happy to put him back in his box and forget about him until it was time for him to be Gryffindor Golden Boy Harry Potter once more.

Pushing back tears and trying to stop the raw edges of the hole in his chest reopening, he almost missed the gentle knock on the door. "It's just us, pup."

The door opened, Sirius and Remus looking sadly through the gap. "Can we come in?" Remus asked softly.

Harry made a noise that was neither acceptance nor denial, but the two men took it as permission, shutting and warding the door behind them. Sirius perched on the edge of the desk. "That was quite something, pup. Even James wasn't that good when he got going." Sirius' attempt at levity fell flat, and he ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

"Harry," Remus began, warily approaching the bed. When Harry didn't yell at him, he continued, sitting on the mattress a couple of feet from Harry's curled up form. "I know... when we took you from your aunt and uncle's house after your third year, we never really — we didn't address the situation. We were just happy to have you, and delighted to see you coming out of your shell at last." He reached out, placing a gentle hand on one of Harry's socked feet. "Perhaps that was our error. Perhaps we should've had you talk about things