

“Shared trauma doesn’t mean I’m *obliged* to be friends with you, Hermione. Besides; you didn’t *go through* half of those! I was alone when I faced Quirrell, I was alone when I killed the basilisk, and seeing as I hardly spoke to *either* of you last year, you can’t say you were *with me* for the tournament either?”

“So you’re just going to throw it all away?” Hermione sobbed. “Four years of friendship?” She wiped at her eyes, then grew serious. “Harry, if this is about your vision — if you’re trying to push us away because you think Voldemort is in your head, that’s ridiculous.” She reached out to grab his hand, but he pulled back. “We’re *here for you*, Harry.”

“Now, when it suits you. When there’s things happening to me that you want to know about,” Harry shot back. “You always want to know *everything*, Hermione; where I’m going, what I’m doing — for the longest time I thought that was how friendship was supposed to go! But I know better, now. I’ve got *real friends*, now. Honest friends, who let me have my space and my secrets, and don’t treat me like I’m incapable of doing my own bloody homework without help.”

“Don’t talk to her like that,” Ron growled.

“I’ll talk to her how I want; she does the same to me!” Harry shouted. He got to his feet, grabbing his schoolwork in a haphazard bundle. “I’m sick of you two treating me like a child, and I understand that with things the way they are we’ll end up being around each other more often than not, but we’re *not* friends, alright? Friends don’t treat each other the way you’ve treated me. So just leave me alone.”

Before they could argue further, Harry stormed from the room — he *hated* the knot in his chest, hated that there was still a small part of him that wanted to rush back in there and apologise and smooth everything over, until they could all go back to the way things were. But he had seen too much of their true colours by now, and he knew there was no place for them in the life he was building for himself.

That didn’t mean it didn’t hurt to say it.

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Utterly oblivious to his godson’s emotional turmoil happening downstairs, Sirius was in one of the little-used upstairs parlours, a Bowie record spinning on the player, enjoying a bit of peace — and avoiding Molly Weasley.

He’d grown used to being mostly alone in the house outside Order meetings. Since the kids had gone to school, pretty much the only visitors he had were Remus, the two Weasley boys, Tonks and Kingsley. He had liked it that way.

Now the house was full again, and while he was delighted to have Harry back... it was a lot. *Molly* was a lot. While she was grateful he was allowing them to stay for the holidays, given the house’s proximity to St Mungo’s, she had gone right back into the mindset she’d had in the summer; namely, forgetting it was Sirius’ house and not her own. She had more opinions than he cared for about his decorating choices, and had entirely re-arranged his kitchen cupboards to her liking without so much as a by-your-leave. Sirius didn’t have it in him to