

In A House of Madness [drabble] In A House of Madness

Bellatrix Lestrange prowled the halls of the house in Little Hangleton, silently daring anyone and everyone to so much as look at her. Five of the Ten were back in the hands of the Ministry, and the decaying walls and dusty furniture paid a terrible price for it. In the old days, she would have killed one of the juniors simply for sport. Wormtail furtively cleared the way. He needn't have; her mad muttering and shrieking was enough to dissuade even the greenest recruit.

She stiffened, spun, and glared at Wormtail. Her eyes were not simply cold, or devoid of feeling; they were Death itself. "Where is Snivellus? I have news for him!" she declared.

"He has gone to prepare a draught for our Lord," Wormtail returned quietly.

She seemed to study him and he wondered if that was a prelude to a curse; then she said, "Of course... this should warm your traitorous heart. Azkaban couldn't kill my dear cousin, but I did. The filthy blood traitor is *dead*." She licked her lips at the last word, and he shivered. *It's just Remus and me now*, he thought, and his silver fingers clenched and unclenched.

She roamed onward, talking to the walls: "Malfoy and his society poufs... not a loss... I'd take Mulciber over any ten of them... you'll be free soon, Rodolphus... I'll see the old Muggle-lover *dead* – and all the rest... Potter couldn't do it – he *couldn't do it* ..." Wormtail's ears perked up, and he followed closely enough to hear.

"Sirius wanted to be little baby Potter's daddy, you know," she told a torn portrait casually. "I killed Potter's daddy... just like our Lord killed his daddy..." Her neck twitched, and she quickly shouted, "I am the Dark Lord's left hand!" then went on as if she had said nothing. "I killed his daddy, and that wasn't enough. Potter tried but he couldn't do it. He couldn't even *hate* me. *Pathetic*. Nothing to fear there... nothing a proper upbringing couldn't cure... Sirius had a proper upbringing... Sirius was... he was... *nothing!*" She gasped, stiffened, and then savagely tore the frame from the wall.

"*I'll teach you the meaning of pain, Potter!*" she shrieked, and blasted the portrait to bits. A very junior recruit happened to wander into the hallway, and just missed being struck by a second blast.

"*PATHETIC!*" she howled.

"Our Lord will need me now – who else can lead? Potter will wish for the Kiss... he will *beg* for

it,” she said to no one in particular, and then resumed her prowling.

“I am the left hand of God on Earth,” she told an armchair. Wormtail resigned himself to the likelihood that she would kill again that night.