

Harry's face split into a grin. Snape was taking him to Sirius! He went to drag his trunk up the stairs, but with a wave of Snape's wand it began to levitate up behind him. "Sir," he said quietly, once they were up the stairs and out of earshot of his relatives. "Won't the Ministry be able to track that?" Between breaking the padlock and levitating Harry's trunk, wouldn't he get Harry in trouble?

"I have ways of keeping my magic undetected," Snape assured him. He waited in the doorway to Harry's room, his gaze studying it. Harry's stomach turned when he realised Snape would piece it all together. No normal boy had eight locks on the *outside* of his bedroom door, or a cat-flap, or the need to hide his homework beneath a loose floorboard. No normal boy had zero signs whatsoever that the room he lived in even belonged to him. He grit his teeth, keeping his head held high. He refused to let Snape mock him for this.

"Hedwig is out hunting," he said, shoving the rest of his possessions into his trunk. He didn't have much — he hadn't dared take out any of his new clothes, in case the Dursleys asked where he got them, and the only magical items he had out were his wand and his homework supplies. "Will she be okay?"

"She'll find you," Snape assured. "Is that everything?"

Harry gave his room one last scan, then nodded. "Yes, sir."

Snape shrunk Harry's trunk down to the size of a matchbox, then led the way back down the stairs, grabbing Hedwig's cage and shrinking that down too. "Ready?"

"Yes, sir." Harry looked to his relatives, quietly amazed that none of them had fainted in fear. If only he'd known sooner that his grouchy Potions' professor could inspire such reactions in his aunt!

"As I said, Petunia. Potter will come and go as he pleases, and if I find out you've told *anyone* where he is or who he's with, I promise you will regret it," Snape said coldly, staring Petunia right in the eye. She glared at him, arms folded over her chest.

"Your father should've tried harder to beat it out of you," she spat. "You have my word, Snape. We won't say anything."

Harry gaped at his professor, Petunia's words making a sickening realisation come together in his mind. *Beat it out of you.*

Maybe he and Snape were more alike than he thought.

To his credit, Snape didn't so much as flinch, offering one last sneer before turning to Harry. "Hold my arm, Potter. Tightly, now."

Harry did as bid, gripping tight to Snape's forearm, and all of a sudden the world span on its axis.

It was just for a split second, but Harry felt like he was being shoved through a small tube. His knees buckled slightly when he landed, but Snape kept him upright, walking him forward